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ISSUE NO 15

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BRIT FORCE ARE COMING!

Brit Force is Britain's Newest, Bi-monthly,Super Hero Comic Book. Black and white. 28 pages printed on glossy, high quality paper. The cover price is £1.60p U.K. and $2.60 U.S.A. So far it has been released via a small number of comic shops in the U.K. and from April '93 distribution will be handled by the following companies:-

Titan Distributors (U.K.)
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Action Direct (U.S.A.)
Andromeda Publications (Canada)
Styx International (Canada)
Hawaii Distribution (U.S.A.)
Heroes World Distribution (U.S.A.)
Friendly Frank's Distribution (U.S.A.)

This will make the comic available from a larger number of retail outlets throughout the U.K., Europe, Canada, and the United States. Order your copy now from a good comic shop or direct from the publisher's address below.
Brit Force is about a team of British superheroes backed by the government as a super powered police force. The team comprises of Moon Witch, Fawn, Bulldog, Lionheart, Stonehenge and Britannia.
The support for Brit Force issue 1 has been incredible so far, and if it continues the comic will be published on a monthly rather than Bi-monthly basis. From issue 2 onwards it will have a glossy, colour, card cover, and from issue 3 increase to 32 pages.

Chris Morgan is the artist, writer and publisher who has turned his attention to his first love of super hero comics after earning an international reputation as a computer graphic artist.
For any enquiries or to order the comic direct then please contact Chris at the address at the bottom of this page.

Try Brit Force....you may be surprised!

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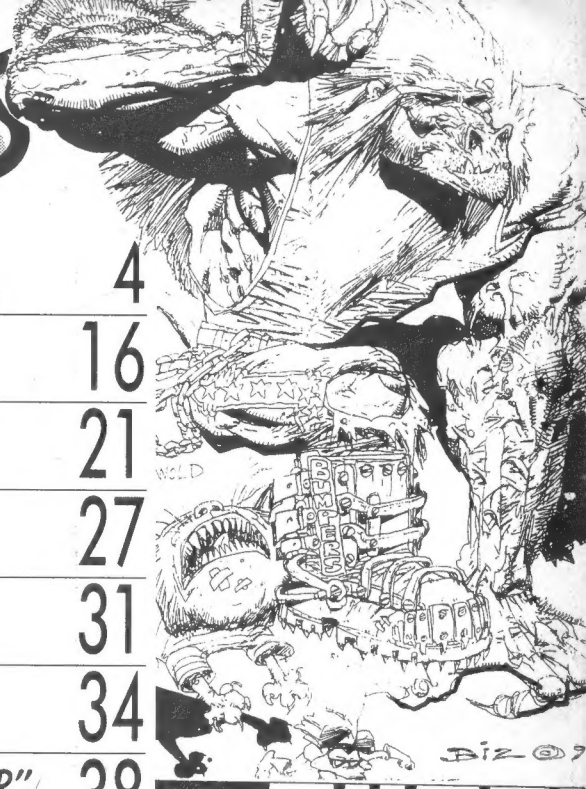

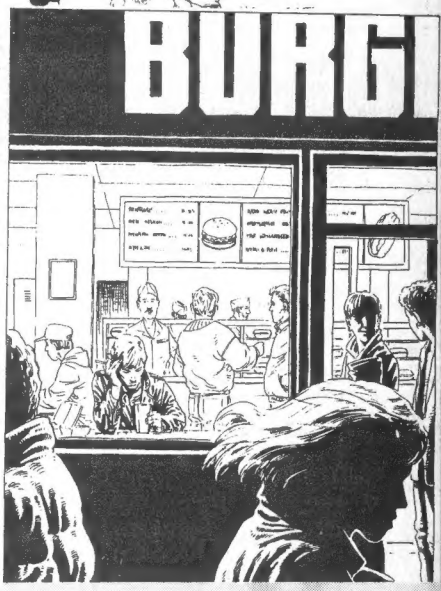

Cover: You'd expect something over the top from Simon Bisley, yes? Well, now he's gone round the bend too – onto our back cover, that is. A big thanks to all at Atomeka for their help with this one. Max Carnage is copyright Simon Bisley & Dave Elliott. Watch out for the Monster Massacre!

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I've plenty to get through this month, so I'll plough straight into it.

Back in our January issue we ran a competition to win copies of two Manga Videos, Venus Wars *and* Legend of the Overfiend. *The winners were: Matthew John Pallett, Justin Doyle, W.J. Collins, James Pope, Desmond Molloy, Donald Ridley, I Dryland, Flip Roncone, Martin Meeks, Reuben Wilmot, Mark Swindlehurst, Andrew Lee, Mark Edwards, Steven Geburtig, Dominic McAra, A. Smith, Simon Bilic, C. Blamey, Calzetti Paolo (all the way from Belgium) and Wai Cheung Man. Congratulations all; you should have received your prizes by now.*

In February we had 10 copies of The Books of Magic *to give away, and the first ten names out of the hat were: David Price, Lee Williams, Yiu-Chung Lam, John Buckworth, R. Lake, Finn Clark, Paul Cogan, Jeff Endersby, Mark Loynds, Matthew Fletcher; if you've not received your prizes by the time you read this keep watching the letterbox, because it won't be long.*

We've finished compiling the results of the Readers Poll – you'll find the results of this hotly contested vote on page 16. We're working on the Questionnaire, with more prize winners to announce next month.

You like competitions, eh? Well, we've some great prizes coming up, including some very, very limited editions which you won't be seeing in many people's collections. We've some signed editions of the latest Mandarin titles on offer this month (page 37), and a major, major prize of a 10 week course at the London Cartoon Centre that'll change the life of one lucky winner! It's on page 47, but get your entries in quick. We were sorry to hear that someone broke into the LCC and stripped the offices of what they could, and we should all feel thankful that some people have faith enough in their work and in comics to continue in such devestating circumstances.

This is important: WE'VE CHANGED ADDRESS. If you look at left and up you'll see we're at Castle House, 97 High Street, Colchester, Essex CO1 1TH; we've moved about 100 yards up the hill – a whole extra minute for me to get into work every day (hey! It's uphill!). It's a new open-plan office and a vast improvement over the garret we were located in before where we were snuggled up tighter than Brian Bolland's pencils. We're still unpacking crates, so bear with us.

We'll be matching the bigger offices with new bigger ideas. You've seen our wraparound Bisley cover already...or if you've rushed straight in here, take another look. If you like it, check out the Bisley interview – too big for just one issue, and we squeezed in six pages this month! It concludes next month alongside a look at the latest plans from Valiant and Dark Horse, plus an exclusive look at 1963 and some stunning limited edition prizes. Over the next few months we've got Dave Gibbons, Barry Kitson, Red Dwarf and 2000AD's Summer Offensive exclusives. If you see someone not reserving their copy, check their pulse.

And if you're going, see you at Glasgow!

Little Annie

HARVEY KURTZMAN DIES

Harvey Kurtzman, best known as the creator of *Mad Magazine* and 'Little Annie Fanny', died of cancer on Sunday, 21 February. He had suffered from Parkinson's Disease since the 1980s which had meant a reduction in his output, although recent years had seen the publication of his autobiography, *My Life As A Cartoonist* (1988) and *From Aargh! to Zap!* (1991), a visual history of comics.

Harvey Kurtzman was born in Brooklyn on 3 October 1924, and was educated at the High School of Music and Art, and Cooper Union Art School, both in New York. His first cartoon was published in *Tip Top Comics* in 1939. In 1942 he joined the Army, stationed in the USA until his discharge in 1945. From 1943 he contributed strips to a number of comics, including Quality, Timely, Feature Publications, DC and Toby; his early 'Hey Look!' strips published in the late 1940s were collected in 1992 by Kitchen Sink Press.

Kurtzman's best known work in comics was for E.C.; his association with the company began in 1949, his early work mostly covers, mystery stories and science fiction rather than the horror tales E.C. were famous for. In 1951 he created their best-selling war line with *Two-Fisted Tales* and *Frontline Combat* for which he wrote and drew some of comicdom's most critically acclaimed war tales, often with adult themes and showing little of the gung-ho, pro-American-War-Machine of other writers. Kurtzman dared to feel compassion for the enemy at the height of the Korean War, and offered an even handed view of the American Civil War, creating two papers that are collected not only for their stylish artwork, but also for their academic skill and the research that Kurtzman devoted to his work.

In 1952 the workload expanded: as well as his work for E.C., Kurtzman was also writing and laying out the daily 'Flash Gordon' strip, to which he added a new magazine, *Mad*. Writing, and often drawing, many of the stories, *Mad* slowly climbed out of the ranks of comics to become the leading American satirical magazine, although it was not without its problems. The campaign against comics in the 1950s eventually led to the closure of E.C.'s horror line, and the closure of the war comics. In 1955, Kurtzman turned *Mad* into a slick format magazine, but only remained for a further five issues; Kurtzman had become increasingly attracted to the larger field of slick magazines outside of comic strip publishers, having met Harris Shevelson of *Pageant* and Hugh Hefner, then just beginning to establish his empire. For Hefner he planned a new magazine, *Trump*, taking with him many of his colleagues from *Mad*, Jack Davis, Al Jaffer, Arnold Roth, Harry Chester, Will Elder and Wally Wood amongst them.

Trump lasted only two issues (1957), but the gathered group of artists quickly turned to their own self-published magazine, *Humbug*, which lasted 11 issues (1957-58) before their money ran out.

Kurtzman continued to contribute to the slicks such as *Pageant*, *Madison Avenue* and *Esquire*, and produced *Harvey Kurtzman's Jungle Book* (1959), an original collection of satirical comic strips for Ballentine. In 1960 he created, edited and co-wrote *Help!* magazine for James Warren, a

UK COMIC SHOP PRODUCE LIMITED EDITION 1963

Chaos City Comics of St. Albans has announced that they will be publishing two limited editions of Image Comic's *1963* title *Mystery Incorporated*. A 'Gold' edition will be signed by artist Dave Gibbons and limited to 500 copies; each will contain a token which offers the purchaser the chance to win a page of original artwork from the series. A 'Platinum' edition of 100 copies includes additional art pages, and will also be signed by Gibbons.

The profits from the sale of the limited editions will be donated to cancer research.

This is the first charity collaboration of this kind in the UK, although the limited benefit comic is not unknown in the USA – the most recent example being the *Trial of Venom* UNICEF benefit comic which has leapt in price in the UK due to UNICEF not mailing copies outside the USA, dealers currently asking up to £45.

The idea for the charity edition was that of Chaos City's Richard Emms, who told us, "It was really just a way for us to do something rather than just moaning about the recession. Dave Gibbons comes in regularly and we talked about it with him, and he kindly agreed to sign the books. We have permission from Alan Moore, Rick Veitch and Image, and we'll be doing an even more limited 'Bronze' edition for people who have helped, which is not for the public.

"We hope the book will do us some good. We've already had other shops phoning up desperately for copies. The idea is going to catch on. At the moment I'm paying for the printing and everything and all the proceeds go to cancer research. We should raise a few thousand pounds."

humour magazine which included photo-strip stories based on the classic *fumetti* of Italian magazines; Woody Allen appeared in one of the strips, as did John Cleese and Terry Gilliam (Kurtzman's assistant at the time), who were introduced for the first time.

Help! lasted until 1965, during

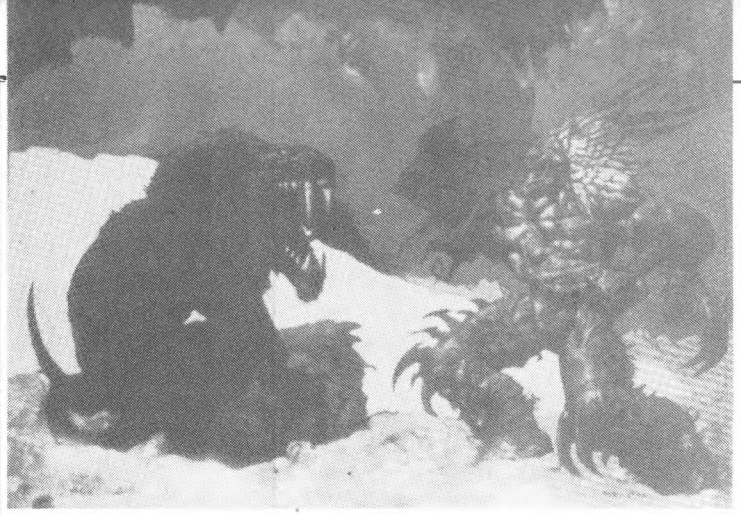
KA-PWEENG! MORE POWERFUL THAN A LOCOMOTIVE! BUILDINGS IN A SINGLE BOUND!... BOINNGSWOOOSH!...
?... IT'S A PLANE!... IT'S...
PERMAN!
E.C. FOR ME, GEE!
SUPER...
SUPER CRUNCHES
NEW SUPER SCAN!
Kurtzman/Wood

which time Kurtzman created 'Goodman Beaver' in 1961 for the paper (although he had appeared earlier in *Jungle Book*), compiled the photo book *Who Said That?* (Fawcett Publications, 1962), and created 'Little Annie Fanny' for *Playboy*, a full-colour pastiche of 'Little Orphan Annie' with a cast of hundreds. The strip ran to 106 episodes over the years between 1962 and 1988

Over the next few years Kurtzman wrote *Harvey Kurtzman's Fun and Games* (Fawcett, 1965), illustrated and wrote articles, appeared in adverts for Scripto Pens, and wrote and designed three one-minute animated films which appeared on *Sesame Street*. During the 1970s, he worked for various magazines and fanzines, and the French magazine *L'Echo des Savanes*; in 1976 his *Kurtzman Komix* collection appeared, and he received an Inkpot Award in 1977. In 1980 he edited and wrote two editions of *Nuts*, a children's paperback magazine.

During the 1980s, Kurtzman was diagnosed as suffering from Parkinson's disease, which led to a drop in his output and to the cancer which eventually killed him. He is survived by his wife, Adele, three daughters and a son, and a legacy of 50 years of comic strip satirical humour and haunting war stories which continue to inspire new fans throughout the world.

H. Kurtz



MONSTER MASSACRE

"Too huge to contemplate," was the way Frank Wynne described *Monster Massacre* when the title was first announced. Frank has gone to pastures new (*Deadline*), but the Massacre is about to start.

Monster Massacre is at first a 64 page full-colour, softcover collection which will spin into a six-issue mini-series and three 48-page prestige format specials, entitled *Carnosaur Carnage*, *Hardware Havoc*, and *Necro Nightmares*.

The first collection includes the combined talents of Simon Bisley & Dave Elliott's 'Maximum Force', J.D. O'Barr's 'Chinese Bones', Kev O'Neill's 'The Kingdom of Zitturk', plus Dave Gibbons, John Furman, Dougie Braithwaite, John Tomlinson & Peter Snejbjerg. Simon Bisley provides a wraparound cover. You wanna know more? Look at our cover and read the interview!

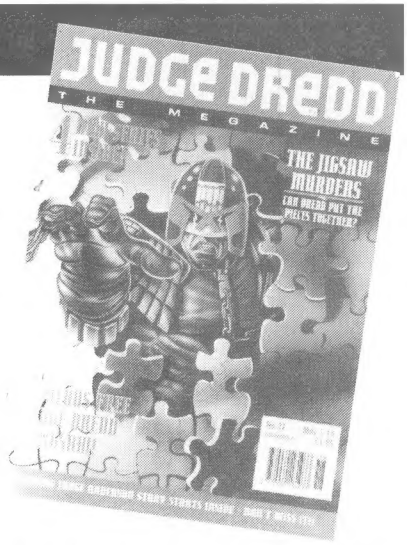
DC'S TRINITY

***Trinity* unites three of D.C.'s cosmic hero titles, *Green Lantern*, *L.E.G.I.O.N. '93* and *Darkstars*, with two bookend specials. The first, *DC Universe: Trinity 1* ships on June 15, a three part story drawn by the respective creators of the three titles involved. The story involves the Triarch, a trio of ancient deities who, a billion years ago, went forth to remake the Universe. Now they've come back to finish the job forcing the Green Lantern Corps, L.E.G.I.O.N. and the Darkstars into a cataclysmic war against seemingly omnipotent beings.**

The x-over then runs through *Green Lantern 44* (June 22), *L.E.G.I.O.N. '93 #57* (June 29), *The Darkstars 11* (July 6), *Green Lantern 45* (July 20), *L.E.G.I.O.N. '93 #58* (July 27), *The Darkstars 12* (August 3) and *D.C. Universe: Trinity 2* (August 10). We'll have some exclusive revelations about the series from Barry Kitson in a couple of months time.

BRITISH NEWS

MEGAZINE SPRING PROMO



***Judge Dredd the Megazine* celebrates a year of publication with the start of 4 new stories in issue 27, plus cover-mounted free gifts for 27-29.**

On sale, 1 May, *Megazine 27* begins a new Dredd case, 'The Jigsaw Murders', by John Smith & Xuasus, which features a serial killer with a talent for assembling new bodies out of corpses; Judge Hershey returns in 'A Game for Dolls' by Igor Goldkind & new artist Kevin Cullen, set in Mega-City's Red Light District, The Slab; Harke and Burr are a new pair of rogues introduced by Si Spencer & Dean Ormston, described as a cross between Lovejoy and *Lethal Weapon*; and the long-awaited Judge Anderson tale, 'Childhood's End' which has Anderson on Mars investigating a mysterious pyramid – but someone wants her dead. Alan Grant & Kevin Walker are behind the eight-part epic.

PUMPING IRON

Marvel start pumping Iron in June with three new titles, *Killpower*, *Battletide II*, and *Death's Head II/ Die-Cut*. The first two will be 4 issue series, the latter a two-parter.

Killpower, late of the *Motormouth and Killpower* title and co-star of the enormously successful *Battletide*, no longer has the gentle guiding hand of Harley Davis, and his own series reveals some of the darker aspects of his childlike nature. American writer Mike *(Detective Comics, The Outsiders, Maze Agency)* Barr links up with newcomer Cedric Nocon as Killpower is sent by MyS-TECH on missile testing missions in the far reaches of time and space.

Killpower also co-stars in *Battletide II*: the earlier *Battletide* pitched him against Death's Head, and now the two are working together to stem the advance of the Battletide force as their destructive power

surges through the universe, with Earth in the firing line for havoc and destruction. Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning reunite with Geoff Senior.

Death's Head II and Tuck find themselves trapped in an alien laboratory with no way to escape an aggressive mob; reaching down into his 106 personalities, Death's Head finds a genius inventor to get them out. The manic inventor, however, becomes dominant and builds himself a cyborg body. *Death's Head II/Die-Cut* is written by Bernie *(Dark Angel)* Jaye with art by newcomer Mike Gonzaga.

Elsewhere at Marvel, Tim Quinn, who briefly took over the editorship of *Overkill*, is now in charge of 'Special Projects'; he will continue to edit *The Exploits of Spider-Man*. *Overkill* will be edited by Jacqui Papp and Alan Cowsill.

When you enter a comic store and make a purchase, you are not simply buying something to read, you are providing that establishment with hard cash. Cash that they can spend in any way that they see fit. Does the store you frequent use that money efficiently and effectively to the advantage of you, the customer? You pay their wages. Are you getting value for money?

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Information

Many, including ourselves, find it hard to keep abreast of what is coming out and when. In answer to this problem, Gosh! publishes and provides for free a weekly information one sheet, listing titles due the following week; those that shipped the previous week; information on cancelled and rescheduled books; as well as news on the 'hot', up-and-coming projects from the various publishing houses.

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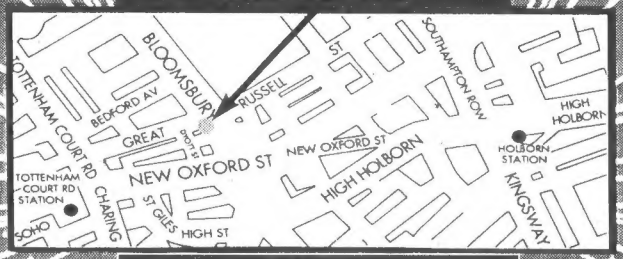

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★★★ UK NEWSBRIEF ★★★

C.M. COMICS

C.M. Comics is a new imprint founded by Chris Morgan for his 28 page superhero comic, *Brit Force*, planned as a bi-monthly black 'n' white with a gloss cover, priced £1.60. This is writer/artist Chris' first venture into comics, but he already hopes that it will be the first of a new line of titles from various creators.

DARK HORSE

Total Carnage 2 features an *Army of Darkness* cover by John Bolton with the film due for UK release in June; also featured are *Batman vs Predator*, *The Mask*, and *Gredel: War Child*.

The Coppola movie adaptation concludes in *Dracula 5*, which also features a complete Frank Frazetta story from Warren's *Creepy*, entitled 'Werewolf'.

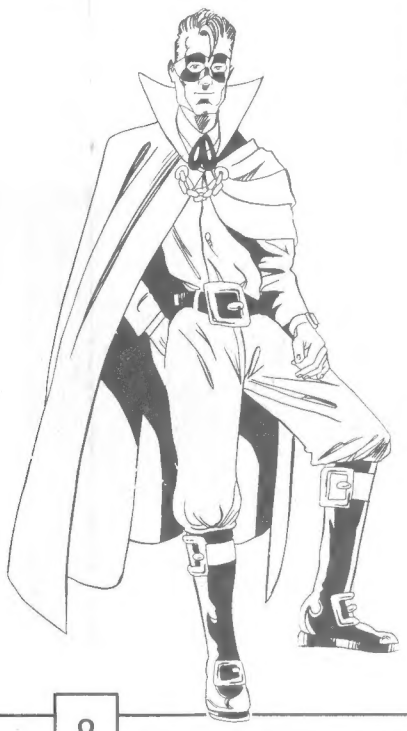
Aliens 11 features a cover by Poll Winner Colin MacNeil, and sees the final part of *Predator: Rite of Passage*.

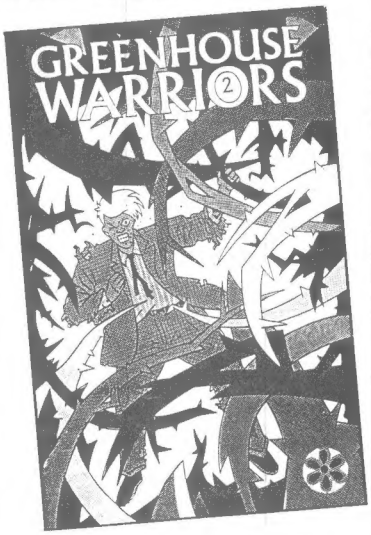
The first 'Classic Star Wars' adventure concludes in *Star Wars 8*, which also has part two of the new Tom Veitch penned 'Tales of the Jedi' and Indiana Jones delves into the 'Shrine of the Sea Devil'.

UT PRODUCTIONS

Almost before they were away from the starting post, both *Gag* and *Kack* have been cancelled by their publisher, Sport Newspapers. The second issue of *Kack* went on sale in March, whilst *Gag* number 2 was finished and the contributors paid, but was not printed.

The premature termination of the two titles was not due to low sales – figures for the first issues are not yet available – but lack of advertising support when both Smiths and Menzies refused to stock the comics.





Kack's editor Russ Carvell has returned to his work in advertising illustration, whilst *Gag* editor, Kev Sutherland, continues his association with both the *Red Dwarf Smegazine* and designer for the official merchandise of the TV series. UT Productions and Century 22 are currently developing a licensed superhero comic to tie in with *Heroes*, a sit com being developed for TV by Paul Z. Jackson.

CJ PUBLICATIONS

Bryon Whitworth, 17 Hill Street, Colne, Lancs. BB8 0DH, has just released *The Power Pack: An Index of the Power Comics*, compiled and introduced by Steve Holland *[that name sounds familiar! – Ed]*. It's a 170 page softcover index to the Power Comics of the 1960s, the launching pad for many a Marvel fan with its reprints of Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, Hulk, the X-Men, and many others.

PHIL ELLIOTT

Fans of *The Greenhouse Warriors*, cancelled last year by Tundra after one issue, will be pleased to hear that Phil is now self-publishing the title, written by Glenn Dakin. Issue 2 is now available for £2.00 from Phil at 2 Alexandra Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 2TD.

BATMAN/GRENDEL – AT LAST!

The historic crossover between the Dark Knight and Matt Wagner's devilish Grendel is to appear in two 48-page prestige format volumes, the first shipping June 22, the second on July 6.

Written and illustrated by Matt Wagner, the series was completed three years ago, but was held back when Comico, Wagner's publisher, collapsed. Now reborn as Comico, the Comic Company, the inter-company crossover is a first in that it is the first to mix a company owned character with one that is creator-owned.

The story features Wagner's first incarnation of Grendel, Hunter Rose, playing power games with Bruce Wayne in Gotham's high society. Meanwhile, Batman finds himself up against a new, vicious foe of uncanny intellect and evil intent.

Spinning out of the Batman saga is the new monthly *Catwoman* monthly, shipping July 6, whose debut ties in with the current 'Knightfall' storyline and is celebrated with a black embossed, spot-varnished cover. Written by Jo Duffy with artists Jim Balent & Dick Giordano, the series opens with Gotham in chaos as Catwoman goes to work for the new ruler of Gotham's streets, Bane.

VERTIGO JAM

Vertigo kick off their first occasional *Vertigo Jam* anthology with a new Sandman story by Neil Gaiman & Kevin Nowlan, and new stories from other titles which form the

core of the Vertigo lineup: Garth Ennis & Steve Dillon provide a *Hellblazer* story, Pete Milligan & Michael Allred explore religious morals and a priest's carcass in a story of Shade the Changing Man, Rachel Pollack & Eric Shanower pursue two escaped spirits alongside the other members of Doom Patrol, Jamie Delano, Scot Eaton & Mark Pennington features Animal Man and a talking turkey, Ann Nocenti & Sean Phillips have some bizarre goings on in Kid Eternity, and Nancy A. Collins, Philip Hester & Kim DeMulder spotlight Swamp Thing. Glenn Fabry provides the fully painted cover.

Also new from Vertigo is the revived *Jonah Hex: Two-Gun Mojo*, a five issue mini-series by Joe R. Lansdale, Timothy Truman & Sam Glanzman, with Sam Parsons providing the colour. Jonah Hex is a hideously scarred gunman, the setting a small town, Mud Creek, where dead gunmen walk the night as zombies. The first issue ships July 15.

Elaine Lee & Gabriel Morrissette. Entitled *Cry of the Dead*, the star is reluctant hero Rory Regan, who investigates a series of grisly murders, only to find himself drawn into a battle with a malevolent voodoo god called Marinette.

If you missed it first time round, *Batman: Sword of Azrael* is collected as a trade paperback, priced $9.95, and shipping June 22. The Dennis O'Neil, Joe Quesada & Kevin Nowlan saga weighs in at 112 pages.

●●●●● ROUND UP ●●●●●

The *New Titans* have something worth celebrating: issue 100 ships on June 22, a holo-foil enhanced, 48-page special, concluding the 'Darkening' storyline. It also marks the wedding of Nightwing and Starfire, and the orchestrator of recent disasters is revealed: Raven. The results of the battle with Raven and his 2001 counterpart, Deathwing, will redirect the series, says editor Rob Simpson.

Metamorpho is a new ongoing series, shipping June 29. Mark Waid, Graham Nolan & Ron Boyd revive the sixties Elemental Lad for a battle to save the life of his son.

Another revival, Ragman gets a new 6-issue mini-series thanks to

The *Bloodlines* crossover will continue with 'Earth Plague', running through the following annuals: *Robin 2* (July 6), *Action Comics 5* (July 13), *Legion of Super-Heroes 4* (July 20), *Green Arrow 6* (July 27), *Detective 6* (August 3), *Justice League America 7* (August 10), *Adventures of Superman 5* (August 17) and *Hawkman 1* (August 24); it's immediately followed by the third and final wave, 'Death Storm', in the pages of *Deathstroke, the Terminator 2* (August 31), *Eclipso 1* (September 7), *The Demon 2* (September 14), *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight 3* (September 21), *Team Titans 1* (September 28), *L.E.G.I.O.N. '93 #4* (October 5) and two specials, *Bloodbath 1* and *2* shipping October 12 and 19 respectively.

★★★ US NEWSBRIEF ★★★

CONTINUITY

The Deathwatch 2000 x-over continues and concludes through the pages of Continuities May titles: *Armor 2*, *Hybrids 2*, *Megalith 2*, *Ms. Mystic 2*, *Earth 4 #2*, and *Cyberrad 2*. Usual cover-wars rules apply, and Continuity have (respectively): wraparound by Michael Golden, thermal chromatic, wraparound by Neal Adams, wraparound by Adam Hughes, wraparound by Aaron Weisenfeld, and interactive. Interactive? Y'see, the final panel of the issue is stuck to the cover, so you have to peel it off and put it on the last page to finish the story...

DARK HORSE

May titles from Dark Horse include 1st issues for *The Dirty Pair: Sim Power* (4 May) by Adam Warren, based on the Japanese Animated super-sexy secret agents; *Universal Monster: Frankenstein* (4 May) by Denis Beauvais, is based on the classic Universal film; *Accident Man* (11 May), is a 3 issue series by Pat Mills, Tony Skinner & Duke Mighton, the return of the

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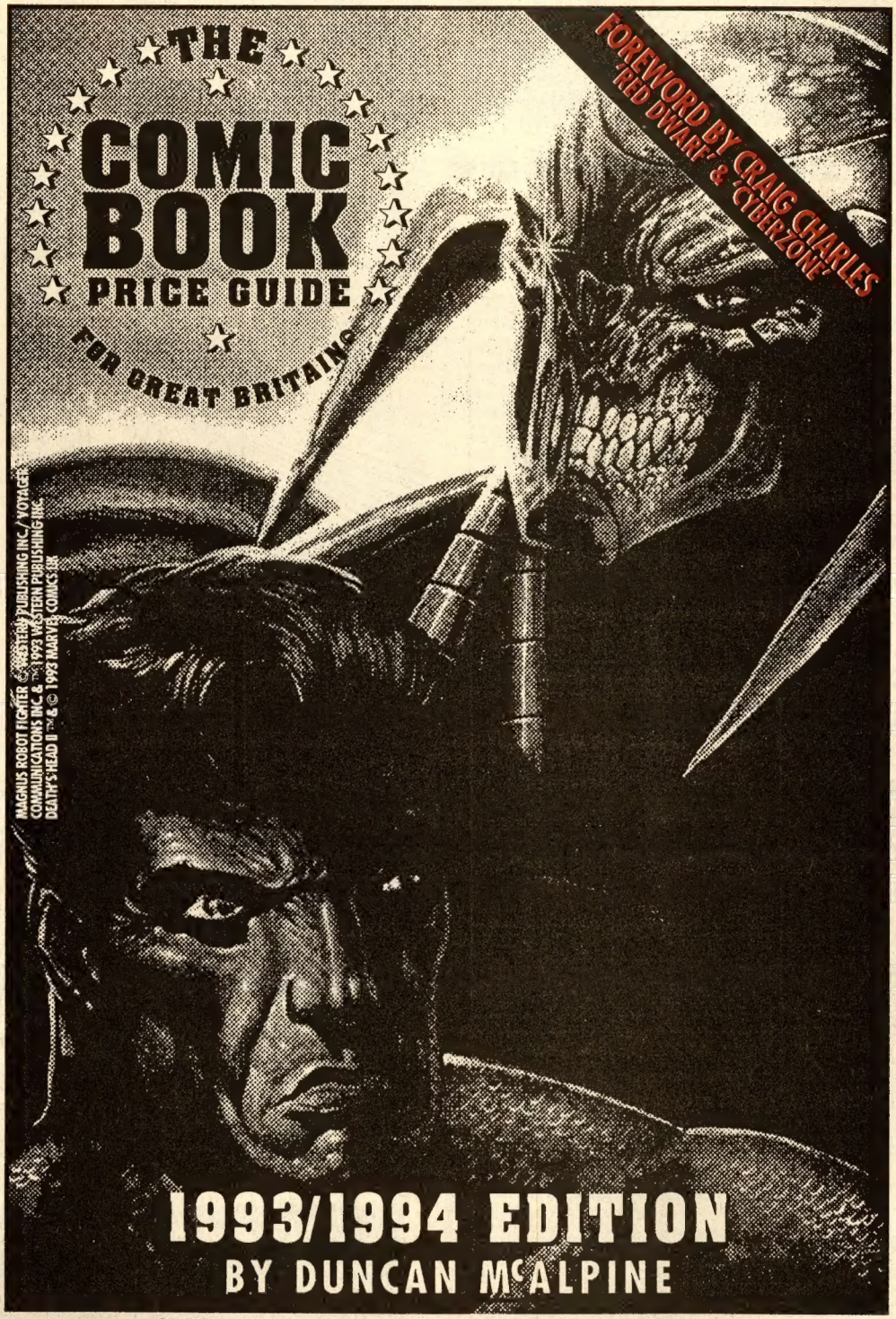

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THE SENTINEL OF THE SPACEWAYS

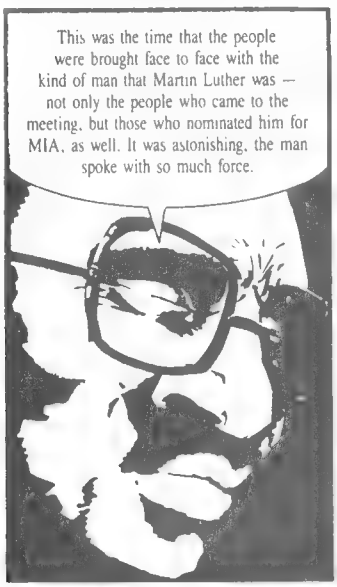
character previously seen in *Toxic!*; *Caravan Kidd Part 2* (18 May) follows the action of Mian and Wataru's escape from the Empress Shion, Mian getting into trouble in a local tavern; and the collected *Aliens: Sacrifice* (25 May) by Pete Milligan & Paul Johnson from the pages of the British *Aliens* magazine.

The 1001 Nights of Bacchus is a 48-page collection of bedtime stories for Eddie Campbell's Bacchus, including The Man Who Couldn't Say Boo, The Angel Seamus, and Gilgamesh the Scottish Soccer Hooligan.

Dark Horse Comics 10 includes part 1 of 'Predator: The Pride at Nghasa' by Chuck Dixon & Enrique Alcatena, and 'Godzilla: Blast from the Past' by Randy Stradley, Bobby Rubio & Brian Garvey.

FANTAGRAPHICS

London born Canadan resident Ho Che Anderson is the writer/artist of *King*, a three part uncompromising graphic biography of Martin Luther King. The first 80 page book is


This was the time that the people were brought face to face with the kind of man that Martin Luther was — not only the people who came to the meeting, but those who nominated him for MIA, as well. It was astonishing, the man spoke with so much force.

published in May, black & white, is priced at $7.95, and looks at the events that led to King's arrival in the front lines of the civil rights movement.

Dan Clowes' *Like A Velvet Glove Cast In Iron* is collected from the pages of *Eightball* into a limited 1,500 copy signed and numbered hardcover edition, priced $39.95. A softcover version is priced at a more wallet-friendly $14.95.

IMAGE COMICS

Plenty of new releases from Image in May, but watch out for the subliminal spoiler revealing who killed Spawn.

Shaman's Tears, a new monthly by Mike Grell which follows the rite of passage of a man from to human to superhuman. Jim Valentino & Chance Wolf provide *Shadowhawk II*, a three-parter which promises to reveal all; the first issue has a die-cut mirricard cover. *StormWatch 0* reveals the origin of StormWatch by Scott Clark & Trevor Scott. *Stupid 1* is a spoof by Hilary Barta & Doug Rice of McFarlane's Spawn, and is promised as a quarterly featuring other idiot cousins of Image characters. Keith Giffen joins the crew with *Trencher*, an ongoing monthly about a man whose job is to repossess misplaced or errant re-incarnated souls. And, finally, *WildC.A.T.S.: Trilogy 1* begins a three-part story entitled 'The Ties That Bind' featuring the creations of Jim Lee.

"No One Escapes" *The Fury*! It can only be the second issue of Alan Moore's *1963*, two stories of superdoing as The Fury discovers the mysterious Cargo X, by Moore, Rick Veitch & Steve Bissette, and pits himself against The Void, with art by Jim Valentino & Dave Gibbons.

'Blood Brothers' continues through the pages of *Bloodstrike 2* and *Brigade 2*, the latter featuring a mirror coat cover.

Todd McFarlane concludes the quintology of special issues by taking over the writing himself again for *Spawn 13*, where you'll find out who (Chapel from Youngblood) killed Spawn.

May also sees the release (maybe) of *Deathblow 2* by Jim Lee, *Phantom Force 2* with eight pages of Jack Kirby pencils, *The Maxx 3*

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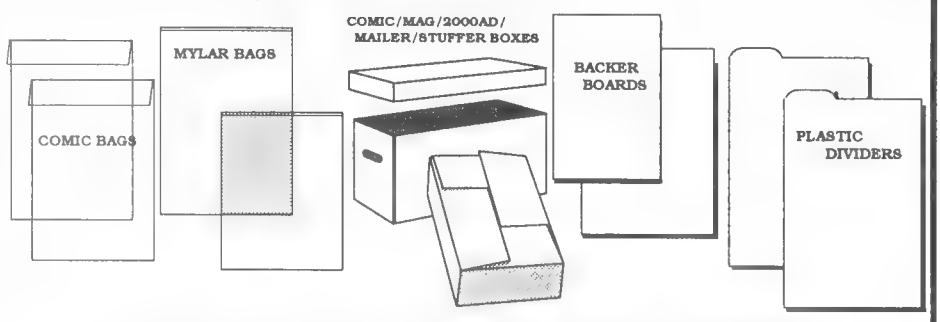

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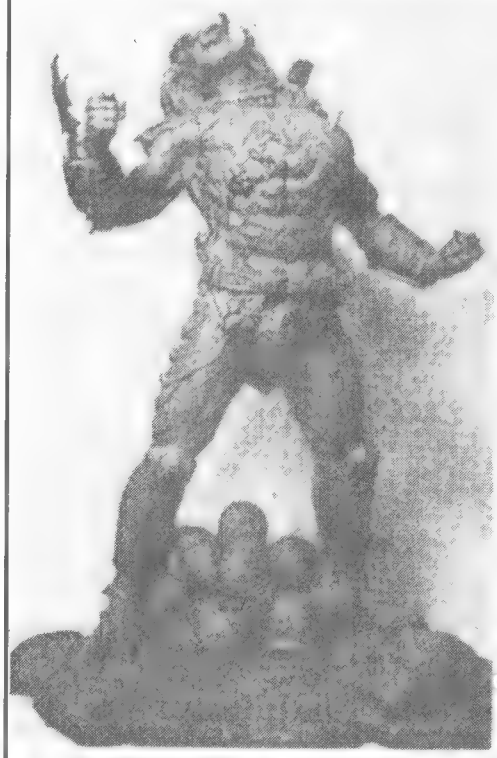

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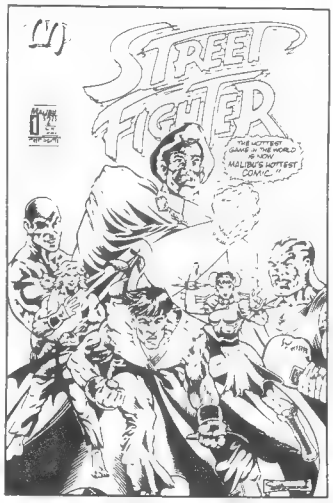
by Sam Kieth, *Supreme 7* by Liefeld & Murray, *Tribe 3* by Todd Johnson & Larry Stroman, *Youngblood: Strike File 3* by Leifeld & Jae Lee, and the first *Youngblood Annual*. *The Savage Dragon* is collected as a trade paperback.

And if you want to know all about your favourite Image creators, why not try Revolutionary Comics' *Contemporary Bio-Graphics* issue 8 which will concentrate on the launch of Image, beginning with Rob Liefeld, Todd McFarlane & Jim Lee's departure from Marvel.

In the meantime, the cover-wars continue and Image have 'upgraded' three of their titles: *Bloodstrike 1* will have a spot embossed thermal ink cover, and a rise in price from $1.95 to $2.50, *Deathblow 1* will have a black varnish cover, and *Youngblood: Strike File 2* will have a 'split foil' cover.



MALIBU COMICS

The most popular video game of the 90s comes to comics in May when Malibu issue *Street Fighter 1*, featuring Chun-Li, Ryu, Ken, Sagat, Honda and the rest of the arcade characters. Well in time for the live action film currently in production, the comic, written by Len Strazewski with art by Don Hillsman, promises to reveal previously unrevealed details about the characters.

The Ferret follows up his one-shot adventure outside the environs of *The Protectors* with a four-issue series, written by R.A. Jones with artwork by Dean Zachary & Mike Miller.

TOPPS COMICS

Topps have announced the creative team for their adaptation of the Steven Spielberg movie *Jurassic Park* which is released in the States on 12 June. It's Walt Simonson, Gil Kane & George Perez for script, pencils and inks respectively. Editor-in-Chief, Jim Salicrup, has announced the title as "one of the biggest comic book publishing events of 1993". The four-issue series will include the ubiquitous polybag and three unique-to-the-comic trading cards with each issue, and Topps will also be publishing a special *Jurassic Park* souvenir magazine to coincide with the release of the film.

Collectors might like to note that the Gil Kane card with the first issue of *Ray Bradbury Comics* was a *Jurassic Park* preview...

VALIANT

May is Valiant's X-O Manowar Month with the release of the regular *X-O Manowar 19*, a change in pace as Aric, tired and depressed after recent events, leaves for an extended vacation. leaving the X-O Armor in the charge of Randy Cartier. And when trouble threatens she is forced to don the armor and become X-O She-God-of-War!

May also sees *X-O Manowar #0*, which fills in Aric's pre-history, the story of his capture by the Spider Aliens and his 1,600 years of capture. Artwork for the story is provided by Joe Quesada & Jimmy Palmiotti who also produce the enhanced cover.

And to round it all off there's the *X-O Manowar Trade Paperback* which reprints the hard-to-afford first four issues, adding an 8-page 'X-O Manowar Sourcebook' bonus and a new Bob Layton cover.

Archer & Armstrong 13 is the debut for the new creative team of Mike Baron & Rags Morales, their first move: to settle the pair down so that Armstrong can teach Archer the facts of life.

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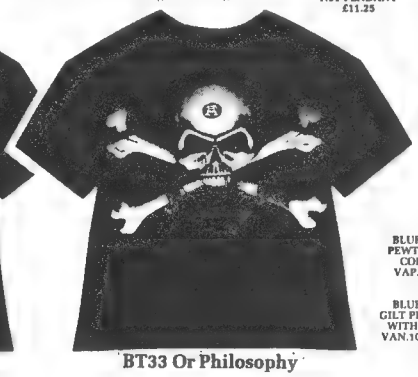

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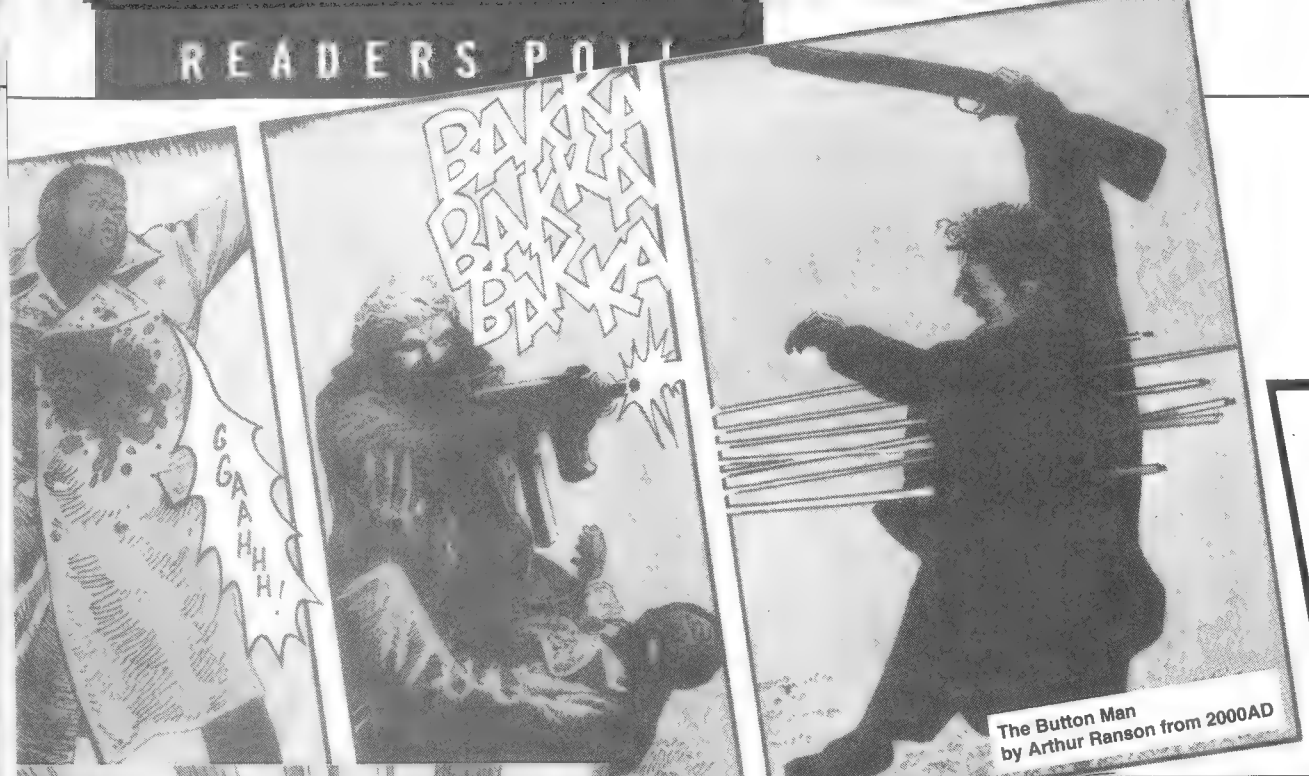

The Button Man by Arthur Ranson from 2000AD

Motormouth by Gary Frank fom Overkill

Death's Head II, inked by Andy Lanning

UK SECTION

Best ongoing title:
1 **2000AD**
2 Judge Dredd Megazine
3 Overkill

Best one-shot/ graphic novel:
1 **Judgement on Gotham**
2 Skin
3 Shadow's Edge

Best limited series:
1 **Death's Head II**
2 Skidmarks
3 Digitek

Best story:
1 **The Button Man**
2 Shadow's Edge
3 Judgement Day

Best artist (pencils):
1 **Arthur Ranson**
2 Jeff Anderson
3 Liam Sharp

Best artist (inks):
1 **Andy Lanning**
2 Cam Smith
3 Steve Pugh

Best writer:
1 **Grant Morrison**
2 Garth Ennis
3 Dan Abnett

Best colourist:
1 **Colin MacNeil**
2 Jeff Anderson
3 Sean Phillips

Best letterer:
1 **Tom Frame**
2 Annie Parkhouse
3 Ellie De Ville

Best editor:
1 **David Bishop**
2 Richard Burton
3 John Freeman

Most promising new title:
1 **Overkill**
2 Shadow's Edge
3 White Trash

Most promising newcomer (writer):
1 **Gordon Rennie**
2 Nick Vince
3 Peter Cornwall

Most promising newcomer (artist):
1 **Gary Frank**
2 Gregg Staples
3 Chris Halls

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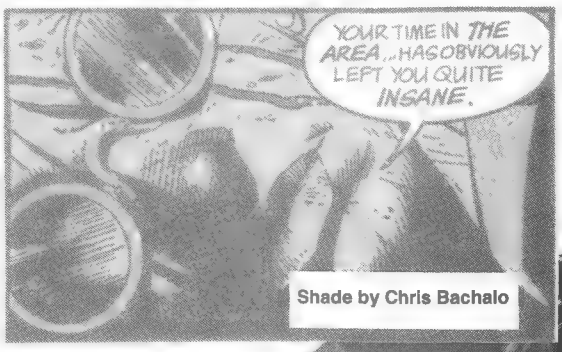


Shade by Chris Bachalo

US SECTION

Best ongoing title:
1 **Sandman**
2 Shade the Changing Man
3 Hellblazer

Best one-shot/ graphic novel:
1 **Wolverine: Inner Fury**
2 Batman: Master of the Future
3 Batman: Birth of the Demon

Best limited series:
1 **Cages**
2 Batman: Sword of Azrael
3 RoboCop vs Termnator

Best story:
1 **Sandman #40**
2 Archer & Armstrong #0
3 Superman #75

Best artist (pencils):
1 **Chris Bachalo**
2 Todd McFarlane
3 Dale Keown

Best artist (inks):
1 **Scott Williams**
2 Mark Farmer
3 Terry Austin

Best writer:
1 **Neil Gaiman**
2 Peter David
3 Dave Sim

Best colourist:
1 **Steve Oliff**
2 Danny Vozzo
3 Tatjana Wood

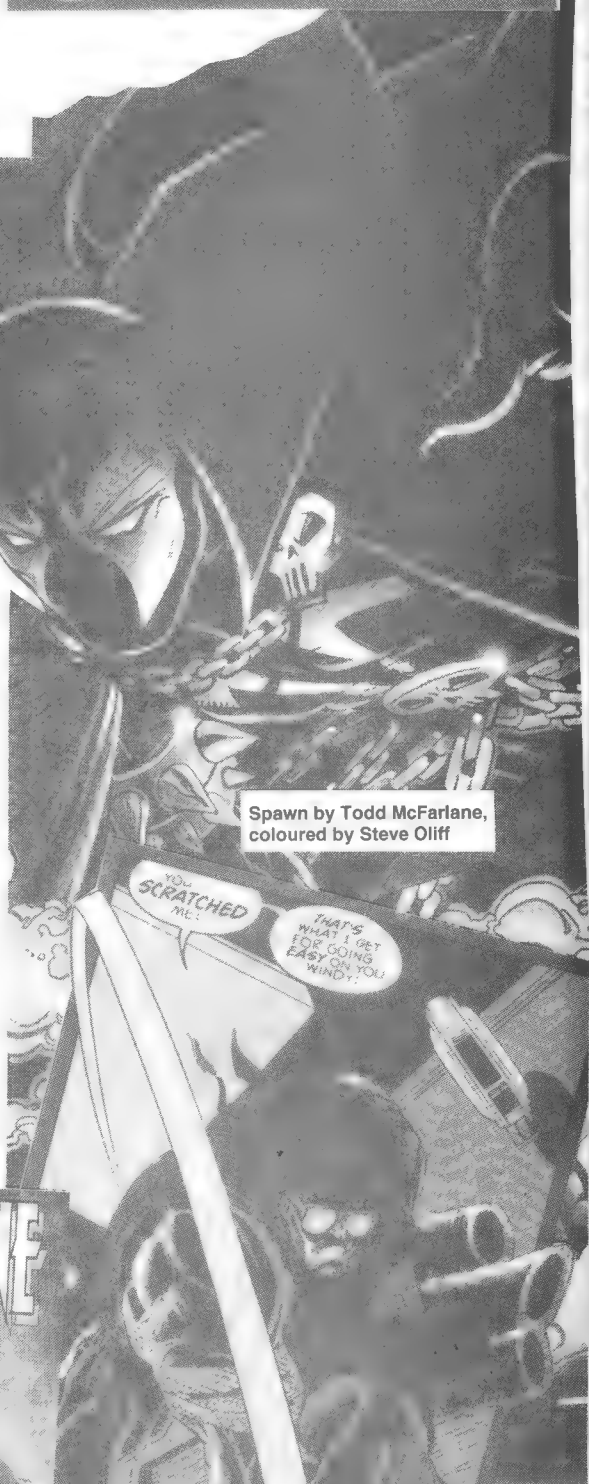
Best letterer:
1 **Todd Klein**
2 Tom Orzechowski
3 John Costanza

Best editor:
1 **Karen Berger**
2 Bobbie Chase
3 Denny O'Neil

Most promising new title:
1 **Spawn**
2 Batman: Shadow of the Bat
3 Archer & Armstrong

Most promising newcomer (writer):
1 **Nancy Collins**
2 Steven Grant
3 Sara Byam

Most promising newcomer (artist):
1 **Joe Quesada**
2 Jae Lee
3 Travis Charest



Spawn by Todd McFarlane, coloured by Steve Oliff

X-Factor by Joe Quesada

Cages by Dave McKean

n by Neil Gaiman, by Todd Klein

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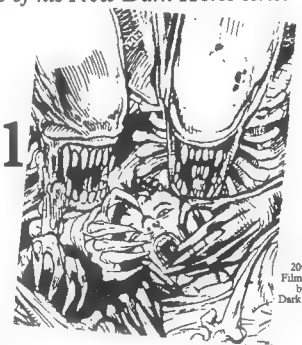

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DON'T GET CAUGHT!

THE THOUGHTS OF PHIL HALL ON DC'S MUCH VAUNTED YEAR OF CHANGE. . . .

Probably the worst thing about advance presentation catalogues from Comic book companies is the anti-climatical feeling you get when you finish reading it. Spring time is the time for the publishers to unleash their forthcoming attractions.

DC Comics had probably the best Christmas and New Year they could possibly have dreamed for. Sales were high on all the ailing Super-titles, the launch of Vertigo seemed to be better than they could have expected and they won a lot of socio-political admirers with their no-nonsense and common sense approach to Milestone comics (which sadly may become a millstone). As you can imagine, hopes were high that DC could continue into 1993/94 with the same enthusiasm they had shown in the last quarter. **The Year of Change.** ***DC's editorial presentation package is an impressive looking 320 plus pages of previews and teasers, with DC's editorial staff obviously believing that Distributors, Retailers and Journalists have the same mentalities as the 'wanna-know' fans. The big problem with it is, there is no change, at least not one you would be instantly aware of.***

John Smith & Scot Eaton's Scarab

Art © DC Comics

DC's big problem seems to be the size and complexity of its universe and the fact that the fan doesn't have a lot of faith with its new product. Look at Darkstars as an example, regardless of the fact that hot newcomer Travis Charest draws it, the comic finds it difficult to establish itself in the Hot 100 sales chart.

DC cannot kill off all of its major characters just to boost sales as they did with Superman, even they have a limited supply of interesting characters; after Batman, Lobo, Robin, Guy Gardner and Wonder Woman it would be difficult to imagine much more than devoted fan interest in the death of another character? So what is the alternative for them?

Obviously high on their agenda is the contracting of hot new artistic talent; they have witnessed what Image did to Marvels position as hirer of the top professionals (Marvel incidentally have just lost new fan fave Jae Lee to Homage Studios), having decided that the easiest way to keep new raw talent is to offer them more incentive to get them to stay.

Firm favourites, Jurgens, Grummett, Semieks, Breyfogle and Erwin, along with current up and coming artists such as Charest, Kirk Jarvinen, Stuart Immonen, Jeffrey Moore and Lee Moder have added a consistency not seen since the Neal Adams and Berni Wrightson halcyon days; they are also introducing a batch of potentially hot newcomers led by Lobo Annual artist and Frenchman Christian Alamy, they also include, Mitch Byrd, Paul Pelletier, Eddie Newell, Vince Russell, and Tomm Coker all of which have been highly praised by DC as being the stars of the future. DC obviously feel that art sells comics as well as characters do, and I expect we will see many of these names take on bigger jobs in the future. Rumour has it that DC are planning a new artistic line up for the Batman titles after *Batman 500*'s supposed climatical ending, with Travis Charest taking over art on one of the books!

Titles which you might not get caught on include; Piranha Press' *Prince: Three Chains of Gold*, after the phenomena of the first Prince comic, this is sure to catch a few dealers on the hop!

While the oddly titled one shot *Captain Stone and the Dinosaurs* looks like it should join such 'classics' as Angel and The Ape, Arak: son of Thunder and Gemm, son of Saturn, don't be surprised if it doesn't. Dinosaurs are still big business in the U.S., *Jurassic Park*, Spielberg's new epic is due for release very soon. *Dinosaurs for Hire* have set comic racks on fire in both countries and even Marvel's appreciation of the Prehistoric four issue prestige series sold better than they could have imagined.

While Vertigo continue with their current contingent of ongoing titles, only the addition of *Sandman: Mystery Theatre* (already out!) and *Scarab* to the regular books makes the Vertigo universe a nice compact group of collectable titles, although many of the mini series leave a lot to be desired in the desirability stakes, guaranteed short lived successes include Grant Morrison's *Sebastion O* and quite possibly *American Freaks: A tale of the Un-men*, which looks at the creatures invented by Len Wein and Berni Wrightson in the pages of *The Original Swamp Thing* issues 2, 3 and 10.

Lobo overkill is this years newest sensation, proving that DC, like Marvel with Cable, have probably missed the boat on this one time hot psycho. No fewer than 7 Lobo projects in the pipeline and *NO* Simon Bisley, expect the excitement to waiver, fizz and die.

Newest Superhero additions include the revamped *Black Lightning*, and the eagerly awaited Peter David/Kirk Jarvinen *Aquaman* series. Two of DC's sixties hits *The Atom* and *Metamorpho* get mini series, while Batman's family of titles are joined by *Robin* and *Catwoman*. *Man-Bat* by Jamie Delano and John Bolton will be the years hottest Bat title, with the first issue scheduled for December 1993.

Everyone has covered *Superman*, but few have spotted a potentially hot DC team book in the form of *S.T.A.R. Corps*, a six issue mini from the team of Dan Vado and Norm Felchle, the chaps who brought us the wonderful *The Griffin* last year. A unashamed tip of the hat to Valiant, this particular Corps are set firmly in Metropolis continuity and may surprise a few people.

While that particular team deals with *Superman* and related plots, more reintroductions of old teams continue with the launch of *The Outsiders* by co-creator Mike Barr and hot newcomer Vince Russell sadly may well have the same impact as its original two runs had.

Metal Men get a 4 issue mini by Superman team of Jurgens and Breeding, emphasis being on Doc Magnus the metal teams creator makes one wonder if this is DC's first DC/Vertigo cross-over as the good Doctor features heavily in the plans of Rachel Pollack's *Doom Patrol*.

Doug Moench unleashes *Xenobrood* which may or may not be another *Omega Men*, one thing it is sure to have is art appeal, as DC are heralding artist Tomm Coker as the new Arthur Adams. I didn't know anthing happened to the old one!

If nothing else DC are ambitious and part of their long term plan is 'establishment', hopefully some of these books will help them to reestablish themselves. We don't get so many late shipping titles and now that Image have taken that honour from them finally, perhaps we will see all of the proposed titles this year, as many of the titles in the presentation were proposed in last years tome.

CW

Travis Charest

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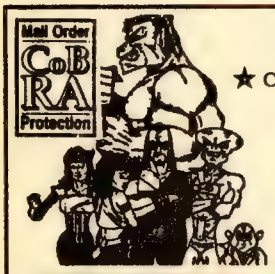

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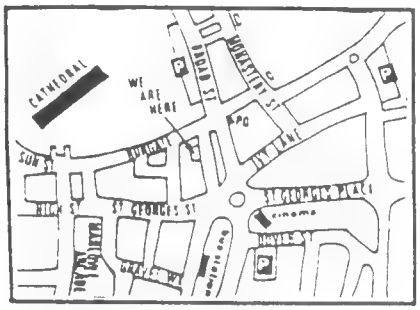

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THE STARS MY DESTINATION

***Down in the bowels of Marvel UK the men responsible for Marvel's stab at science fiction share an office lined with all manner of goodies appertaining to SF past and present. Covers from* Doctor Who Magazine *share wall space with posters from, among others,* Star Trek, Alien *and the long-gone BBC Series* Blake's 7.**

Cyberspace 3000 co-creators Michael Bennent and Gary Russell share a passion for science fiction as well as old Marvel comics, and for writer Russell this is a chance to put his ideas into practice: "Both Michael and I are big *Star Trek* fans so we knew we were on the same wavelength about our ideas of what makes good science fantasy." Editor Bennent echoes the sentiment: "I fancied doing a pulp science fiction series set in the Marvel Universe, something more science fiction-orientated than the books Marvel already have. For instance, the *Guardians Of The Galaxy* is a super-hero comic set in the year 3000 – even Jim Starlin doesn't do classic science fiction stories. I wanted to do something cosmic."

'Something cosmic' in comic terms meant only one thing for Bennent, a comics industry veteran who grew up on a diet of '60s Marvel comics: "I thought of the Fantastic Four. When I created my initial titles I had never worked for a set-up like Marvel UK and the only way I could relate to it was by trying to follow the formula of early Marvel comics. In a sense I tried to create similar titles again, and I wanted my next title to have all the ingredients [of classic science fiction], the *Fantastic Four* in space, as it were."

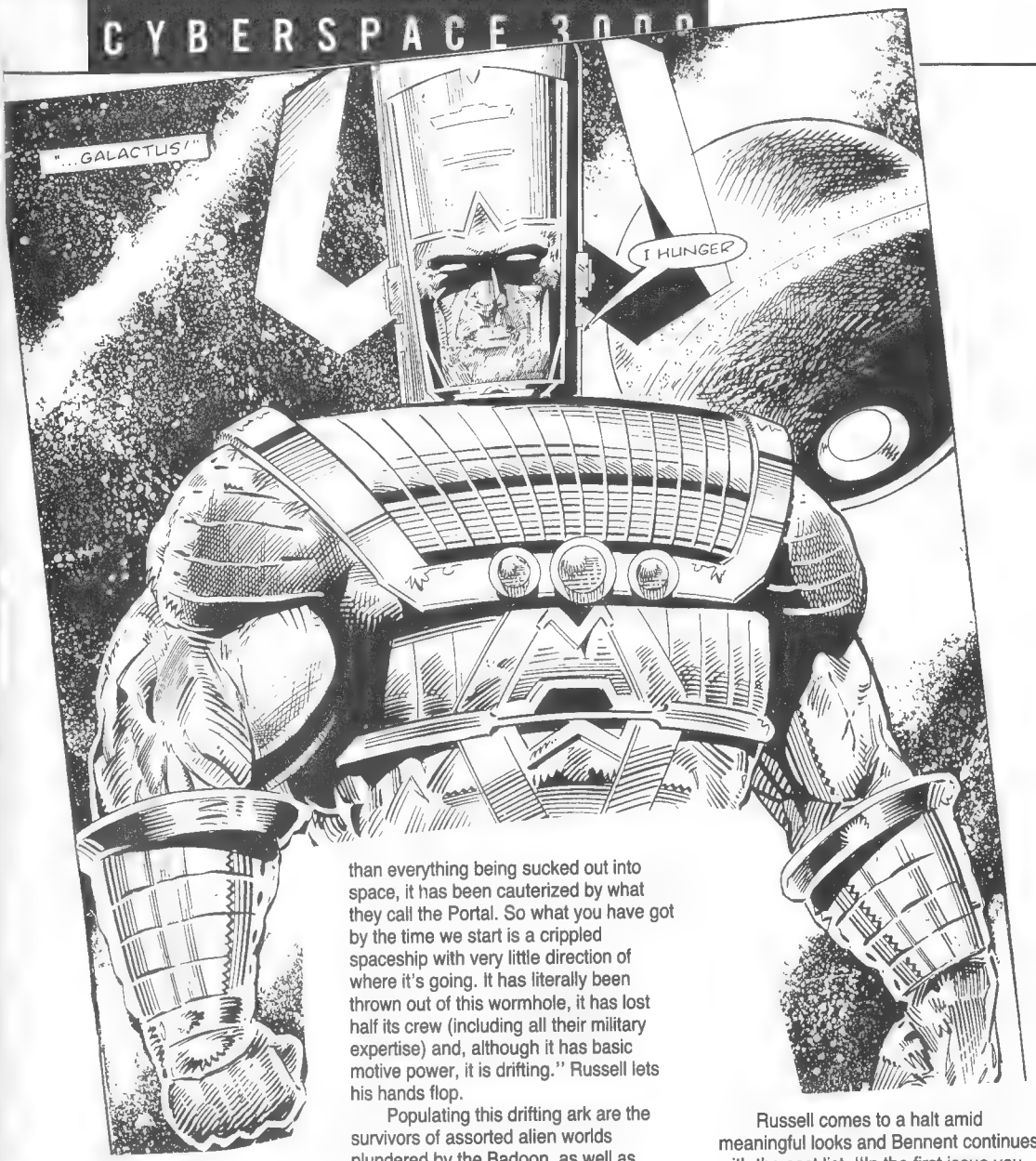
Or Fantastic three, as the case turned out. "Michael came up with the idea and asked me to write it," recalls a somewhat bemused Russell. "Like all projects with Mike, he gives you three lines: *Let's do science fiction, it's set in a big spaceship and it's got three lead characters.* He actually came up with the three lead characters' names – but that was as much as he gave me. He told me to go away and write the story!"

FREE THE CYBERSPACE 5000

For the scenario of *Cyberspace 3000* Russell chose to draw upon the chronology long established in Marvel US's *Guardians Of The Galaxy*. "In the early 31st century Planet Earth is getting a bit overcrowded and mankind is planning to set up a lot of space colonies living on huge self-contained spaceships housing about 5000 people. Earth is building these SOL spaceships when the Badoon begin invading the solar system. All of Earth's colonies on the major eight planets fall one by one to the Badoon and, just prior to the reptilian invaders reaching Earth itself, the only completed SOL spaceship is launched with a basic military crew aboard and as many civilians as they can load quickly."

By now the writer has got into full storyteller mode, complete with mimed hand gestures. "The SOL ship is deliberately shot away from the solar system so that it is out of the Badoons' sight. We pick up the story where the spaceship, having fallen into a wormhole, is coming out the other side. Now if you can imagine this spaceship shaped like a dumbell, with a long bit and two roundish-squarish bits on the side" – Russell's hands make suggestive shapes in the air. "The long thin bit has the living quarters. Then on one bell you have go the scientific end and hydroponics (which creates enough oxygen to keep everything going). The other end is the military command bridge, where most of the security forces live and work.

"When the ship comes out of this wormhole, the military bell has just been sheared off – KA-CHUNG!" He makes dramatic chopping motions. "But rather



than everything being sucked out into space, it has been cauterized by what they call the Portal. So what you have got by the time we start is a crippled spaceship with very little direction of where it's going. It has literally been thrown out of this wormhole, it has lost half its crew (including all their military expertise) and, although it has basic motive power, it is drifting." Russell lets his hands flop.

Populating this drifting ark are the survivors of assorted alien worlds plundered by the Badoon, as well as various unnamed others. "Our three main characters are all humanoid," says Russell. "The captain, who managed to escape the bridge in the nick of time (for reasons we will discover later), is called Jennifer Cabre-Rios but everyone calls her Jen. Then there is the security officer, Onanwro, a huge guy with a bald head. Finally, there is Shan O'Meara, the chief computer engineer. Like the characters in *Star Trek*, these guys have no powers though they have had military training."

It appears, however, that the computer engineer does have powers after all. "We will learn very early on that Shan already has certain empathic qualities but we don't realize quite how powerful he is until Galactus's herald

"WHEN THE SHIP COMES OUT OF THIS WORMHOLE, THE MILITARY BELL HAS JUST BEEN SHEARED OFF – KA-CHUNG"

turns up. Galactus's herald is the 31st century version of Dark Angel: she isn't the Dark Angel that we're familiar with, she is a complete alien, but she has similar powers. She forms a mindlink with Shan and opens his mind up, and we suddenly realize that, if left out of control, Shan's mental powers would be pretty devastating. . . ."

Cyberspace 3000
© Marvel Comics

Russell comes to a halt amid meaningful looks and Bennent continues with the cast list. "In the first issue you also get a little bit of the doctor, a little dwarf-like thing. He is always mouthing off – he is bored with his job and he thinks everybody else is incompetent and that he is the best thing there is. He will play a bigger role in later issues. And we have this little boy coming up who will lose his parents: he has some psychic abilities so he will feature in a bit more of a prominent role in the whole storyline."

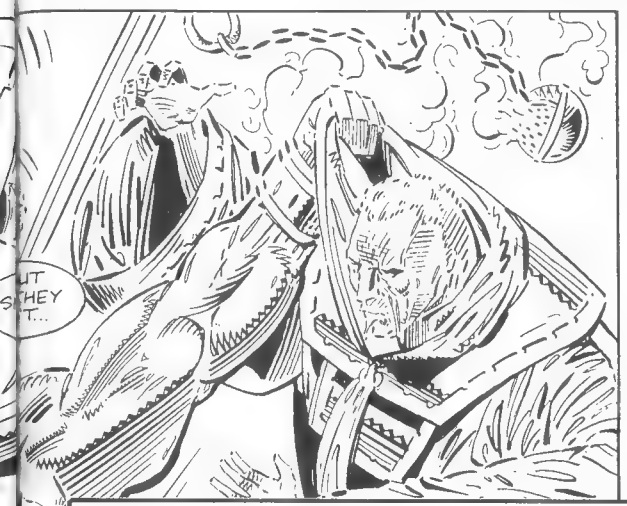
The devil's advocate role aboard ship falls to a bunch of zealots. The writer picks his words with care: "I don't want to call them religious fanatics because I am very aware of people getting upset at religion always being portrayed as bad. These people are called the Clan Cyorse and they are led by a guy called Gui. He has a particularly vicious hench-monk called Mailliw and he his *Not* a nice guy. Basically, they are pressgang hiding under a cloak of religion, because they worship someone who is doom-laden and anything but religious, and at some point we will reveal who he is. They are well-known to Cabre-Rios and the rest of them and they are tolerated as a minor nuisance."

ALL ACROSS THE UNIVERSE

For all the talk of computer engineer Shan's mysterious mental powers, however, it is apparent that this series harkens back to an earlier idiom of comic storytelling, that of the non-super-human team of adventurers challenging the unknown. *Cyberspace 3000* is not so much Michael Bennent's Fantastic Four as his update of those 1950s B-movies. In fact, the man himself prefers to see it in terms of grand space opera: "*Cyberspace 3000* has all the ingredients [of classic science fiction]. You have the spaceship, you have the crew, the team in charge of running the ship: they encounter new worlds, new races, new planets – all that kind of stuff. It's like *Star Trek* in that sense, though more the original than the later series." *Cyberspace 3000* might owe a stylistic

debt to *Star Trek* but the fact that the series is tied into the fictional Marvel Universe should help to distance it from any Trekkie overtones, as Gary Russell points out, "The nearest thing to it in spirit is the *Guardians Of The Galaxy* and a lot of the Starlin stuff. In fact, I tried to find a way to use the Guardians of the Galaxy in flashback in the first issue but it was a bit contrived, it smacked to me of looking like: *We've got to put a guest star in our first issue, we might as well make it the Guardians of the Galaxy.* I hope the book will sell well enough without them in it, but I wouldn't rule them out in the future."

"THE FACT THAT THE SERIES IS TIED INTO THE FICTIONAL MARVEL UNIVERSE SHOULD HELP TO DISTANCE IT FROM ANY TREKKIE OVERTONES"



Not that the creators are averse to guest artistes, you understand – guest stars are the mandatory steroids of comics sales figures and Bennent has no plans to buck a winning formula. "*Cyberspace 3000* is firmly rooted in the Marvel Universe of the year 3000. Everything we see will be valid for 31st century stuff – we are not intending to pick up Wolverine from 1993 but we are going to use Galactus and people like the Silver Surfer because it's fun to play with such great characters. If they're not part of any particular continuity within the Marvel US Universe, you can just bring them in and make whatever you can out of it."

OK, let's see now: we've been over the SOL ship [*tick!*] . . . been introduced to some of the passengers and crew [*tick!*] . . . met the creators [*tick!*] . . . Great Googley Moo, who's drawing the damn thing? With the flourish Bennent pulls two names I have never heard of out of his editorial chapeau. "The penciller is a guy called Steve Tappin. It's his first Marvel mainstream work, although he did some pages for *Toxic!* just before it got cancelled. The inker is Michael Eve who has done other Marvel US books. Both of them have done a tremendous job – it looks very modern in the Rob Liefeld/ Marc Silvestri tradition, very dynamic but with a style all of its own."

Enthusiastic as the editor is over his newish finds though, Marvel custom and commercial commonsense dictate that the early covers remain the province of 'name' artists, in this case Liam Sharp for the first issue and Andrew Currie for issue two.

On the writing front, although the series will be a regular monthly title right from the word go. Ten years of writing for *Doctor Who Magazine* (not to mention two years of editing it) have given Garry Russell a hankering to try a different approach. He will be writing *Cyberspace 3000* in multi-part story arcs, with complete adventures running over several issues. "I wanted to do it in little bits. there is a self-contained story within the first five issues although there will be subplots that lead on to other issues. Things like the major villain's identity will be resolved within the first year – I don't mind a year's worth of mystery so that it culminates in something, but I'm not a great lover of plot threads that matter being dragged on for years and years."

Asked for a final comment on his new baby, once again Bennent's professional reserve wrestles with enthusiasm and loses. "I think the book fills a gap in the market, in that it strikes a balance between good science fiction and a good Marvel comic. Both Gary and the artists have done a first rate job and it's a really cracking read. I hope it gets the attention it deserves and I wish it every success." Gary Russell grins from ear to ear and takes a bow. CW

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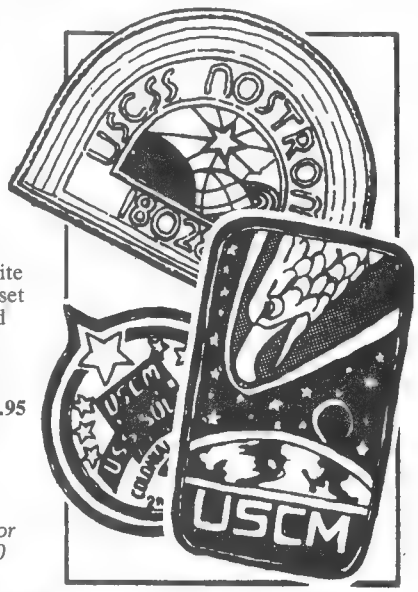

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Dead RECKONING

"DEADLINE IS MORE LIKELY TO END UP ON A RECORD COMPANY RECEPTION DESK OR A BEDSIT TOILET FLOOR THAN IN A MYLAR BAG"

"DEADLINE REACHING ISSUE 50 IS PROOF, IF PROOF WERE NEEDED, THAT MASOCHISM WILL TRIUMPH OVER COMMON SENSE EVERY TIME. I'M OFF DOWN THE PUB" – STEVE DILLON.

Yup, it's still here. The magazine all 'series' comic buffs love to hate, the comic for "people who don't read comics" is celebrating its Golden Jubilee. No matter how much you hate its lack of respect, its haphazard structure and its umpteen changes of direction, you can't help applauding* Deadline *for surviving three of the worst years the industry has ever seen. While major companies wielding massive budgets and enormous page rates have gone upmarket, downmarket, streetmarket – any which way they can in an attempt to attract sales, through the launch (and shipwreck) of* Crisis, Revolver, Toxic, Blast, Escape *and* Xpresso, Deadline *has remained, giggling in the corner like a party gatecrasher puking on your carpet.

Any attempts to make a cold analysis of *Deadline*'s continuing success falter hopelessly before they begin. Its sales may never hold a candle to major titles in the industry, but check out its street credibility: from Steve Wright in the Afternoon to the Ramones, Dominic Diamond to New Order, the *NME* to the *Sunday Sport*, everybody knows *Deadline*. It's almost as though you need an Equity or Musician's Union card to buy a copy. Contrast this with the typical outsider's perception of the spotty bespectacled, anoraked 'average comics reader'. A typical issue of *Deadline* is more likely to end up on a record company reception desk or a bedsit toilet floor than in a Mylar bag in somebody's attic. Isn't that a healthy thing?

For those unfamiliar with the tale, *Deadline* was started in 1988 by *2000AD* stars Steve Dillon and Brett Ewins in an

attempt to recapture some of the hipness, the edge that *2000* started with, but with an emphasis on artistic freedom and a fairer attitude to copyright. The idea was to allow artists to create the kind of material they wanted to read, working on the theory that a labour of love would shine with a quality that the restraints of SF formula would have hidden. Since then, *Deadline* has pandered not to the marketplace, nor the readership, but to its lifeblood – the creators. In its time this has resulted in a lot of self-indulgent nonsense, but it's also nurtured some of the finest material in English comics: the brilliant comic violence of Tank Girl, the quietly surreal soap-opera that was Wired World, the brooding darkness of Hugo Tate, Shaky Kane's Kirbyesque S&M fantasies and the gentle, underrated and ever-so-slightly twisted world of Rachael Ball.

That's how *Deadline* works. To pick on one strip or another is to miss the point – *Deadline* is experiment at its rawest, and the thing about experiments is that they occasionally blow up in your face, or fizzle and die, or they become something completely unexpected, turn bright green and fly around the room shedding diamonds and apricots. You never know.

Can you think of any other magazine where you never know what to expect?

Deadline's greatest miracle perhaps, is its readership. Seventy per cent read no other comics, approximately forty per cent of the readers are women! While other publications are content to appease (and often shamelessly exploit) the existing comics readership, *Deadline* is actually introducing people to what *we* all know can be a valid and exciting medium. If, in doing so *Deadline* also includes articles on (gasp – the blasphemy of it all) music and popular culture, why condemn it? It's a mix that has worked well for the US magazine *Reflex* and, anyway, what's wrong with covering pop music? The attitude among comic fans that the music 'takes away' from the comics is no less tiny-minded than that which defines comics as junk-reading for semi-literate children.

In recent months, *Deadline* has seen big changes. Its continued success has meant that the magazine has been expanded to eighty four pages, the magazine has a new designer and has brought two new features editors aboard. A new overall editor, Frank Wynne (who worked on *Revolver* and *Xpresso*) has taken over the reigns from Si Spencer who is not scripting series' for *Judge Dredd – The Megazine*. As always at *Deadline*, a new editor means a markedly new regime. Si Spencer (for whom "Two years was six months too many"), described his perception of *Deadline* as "Something immediate, cobbled together at the last minute each month. That's how I liked it. It didn't always work, but when it did, it had an edge that no amount of calculation can produce.

Frank, in contrast, is already planning masses of new material for the coming months: "We've just started running a Pleece Brothers strip – 'Several Colours Later'. I think *Deadline* has so much potential, so much room to grow. There's so much talent out that people don't get to see. Future issues will see regular *Deadline* contributors rubbing shoulders with 'underground' artists like Carol Swain (*Skin, Way Out Strips*), Ed Hillyer (*Skidmarks*), Al Columbia (*Big Numbers, Doghead*), Lynda Barry and new talents like Karen Platt, Steven Bliss and Garry Marshall. There's no lack of material – the problem is space!!!"

And what of the fiftieth issue? Well' it's a treat for old fans and for new readers, with all new strips that provide a comprehensive guide to the best of the last forty-nine. No tribute would be complete without a new Tank Girl strip (possibly the last for some time as Jamie is hard at work on a new series, 'Born Again', and preparations for the Tank Girl movie proceed apace); Brett Ewins and Pete Milligan contribute with a welcome return of the culture detective Johnny Nemo; Steve Dillon cuts into his *Hellblazer* schedule with a haunting three-in-the-morning barroom blues of lost love. Nick Abadzis brings Hugo Tate back home (and in glorious colour), Philip Bond brings back Wired World for one more magical dance and Cheeky Wee Budgie Boy puts in an appearance. Rachael Ball is back in Box City. Also in there Shaky's post-apocalyptic God's cops, the A-Men and Evan (*Predator, Bill & Ted, Pirate Corps*) Dorkin's Milk and Cheese – currently to be seen plastered all over Darlene's boyfriend's T-shirt in Roseanne and the Pleece Brothers' glorious 'Several Colours Later'. All in all, a roll-call of some of the best material produced in Britain in the last four years.

Steve Dillon's quote is the finest and most concise summation of *Deadline*'s practice and policy (Particularly the bit about going down the pub). I know from personal experience that everyone involved in *Deadline* has genuinely suffered in a million different ways to get to this milestone issue. Limited budgets, lack of respect from all and sundry, complete confusion on the part of distributors and retailers, poor page rates, punishing schedules, ill health from overwork, censorship . . . you name it, *Deadline*'s been there. The point is that *Deadline* is *still* there. I only hope that more of you out there realise what a good thing that is. Happy fiftieth, see you in fifty more. **CW**

Richmal K.

Art © individual creators

"YOU NAME IT, *DEADLINE*'S BEEN THERE. THE POINT IS THAT *DEADLINE* IS *STILL* THERE"

SWOON'S BAR, SOMEWHERE OUT OF MY HEAD...
YOU KNOW, SWOON. PEOPLE AREN'T SO BAD, ARE THEY? I MEAN, WHEN YOU REALLY THINK ABOUT, EVEN THE EVIL BASTARDS I'VE RUN INTO HAVE HAD THEIR... NICE POINTS.
ANYTHING YOU SAY, JOHNNY.

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NOW THAT THE **NEXUS** RELAUNCH HAS GATHERED A FULL HEAD OF STEAM, RICHARD HILL TAKES A TIMELY LOOK AT THE CHARACTER'S PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Alien Justice

You all know a couple of guys that you see down at the local comic store, and they're working on sample pages to show to publishers, right? Pick any city at any time in the last couple of decades, and you'll hear the same story. Most times it doesn't get beyond the pages receiving a polite thumbs-down from an editor at some convention.

Not this time. This time the tale starts in Madison, Wisconsin; it's 1981. Mike Baron writes, he's spent some time as a newspaper journalist: Steve Rude digs Jack Kirby and *Space Ghost*. They have a smaple story called 'Encyclopedias' in their portfolio.

Meanwhile, the comics industry has happened along the concept of non-returnable distribution. Publishers can actually tell quickly how many comics they're selling and plan accordingly, new companies can enter the field, comic shops can offer more variety and pull in more customers. It's a crazy plan, but it might just work.

Madison's Capital is one of the new breed of distributors, and business is ticking over nicely. Owners John Davis and Milton Griepp decide to branch out into publishing. They see 'Encyclopedias', and Baron and Rude are asked to come up with some ideas.

There is one stipulation – Capital want super-heroes. Baron and the Dude mull over the necessary elements; super-powers . . . fight . . . a neat costume. The character that materializes at the end is Horatio Hellpop; he executes people.

It is not Horatio's wish that he should kill. Disturbing dreams compel him to seek out mass-murderers and exact retribution. Wielding the vast powers and fearsome reputation of Nexus, he lives five hundred years from now, in a complex and crazy universe of which our own world is just a small part. Any visual resemblance between this setting and that of *Space Ghost* . . . couldn't hurt.

As the year draws to a close, *Nexus* begins. It's in a black-and-white magazine-size format to begin with; after three issues of encouraging sales and ever-improving work (and let us not forget the immortal flexi-disc Nexus Theme and soundtrack with issue 3), Capital takes a deep breath and the title is relaunched in that colour comic format we know and love. And then some. Printed on thick matt paper, the colours sing. Les Dorscheid comes on board with issue 2 and, thankfully, sticks around, Rude's art combines ingenious page design and dynamic lighting and camera angles with assured brushwork; all underpinned by supple and rigourously accurate drawing. This is one sharp looking beast. Baron's *Badger*, starring a split personality martial artist and a druid, and Steve Grant 's *Whisper* join the line: life is good.

It emerges shortly that while the good people of Capital are true adepts in the mystic arts of distribution, when it comes to making money at publishing they sadly don't know their arts from their elbows. After six issues, Horatio is cut adrift; marooned on a bowl-shaped world within a black hole, he has only a sartorially-challenged alien and the aforementioned kung fu psycho for company – but hey, that's comics.

WHAT IT IS

After a year of sales-pitching and wheeler-dealing, *Nexus* and the other Capital titles find a new home at Chicago-based First Comics, who have been slowly building a line of gung-ho heroes with knobs on – *American Flagg*, *Grimjack*. Baron and Rude pick up just where they left off. Art fill-ins are required from time to time, as Rude finds the monthly pace hard to live with, but generally the pattern is set for the next few years and stories can be told.

Baron's stories explore the conflicts inherent in holding the position of Nexus. He realizes that his executions do not undo the wrongs that have been done. His home, the moon of Ylum, becomes a refuge for an assortment of people, the victims of malice he cannot and will not ignore. The source of is powers is revealed; the Merk, a creature dwelling deep within the core of Ylum. The Merk has taken it upon itself to be humanity's conscience: Horatio is the Nexus between the Merk and the human race.

The Merk has its own values of justice, it chooses who deserves to die. It may be insane, or simply thinks in a manner alien to ourselves. Who know?

For the humans it wishes to serve, the morality of its mission is more confused. Is even what these people have done so terrible that they should die themselves? General Loomis oversaw an ambitious and well-intentioned engineering project that caused thousands to die in an accident. Blood is on his hands not in the literal sense, but in the political sense. Motlo Till is a sick child murderer; there is no doubt. As their foeman, Dane Koffman drove many slaves to their deaths; but he had been possessed by a malignant demon, and remains innocently oblivious of these events. Do these people each deserve the same fate? Nexus has to live with his

own conscience. He also has to maintain a delicate relationship with those around him – those who do not see his victims as he sees them.

JA

In time, a solution to Rude's deadline difficulties is devised as Paul Smith joins the team as a regular second artist; if it's not Rude, it's Smith. The unusual arrangement works well for a time: as it ends, so does Horatio's time as Nexus – unable to reconcile the conflicts within himself, and their effect on those he loves, he quits. In the *Next Nexus* mini-series, the daughters of General Loomis, driven by their wish for revenge against Horatio, volunteer to replace him. It must be remembered that Horatio had been essentially forced into becoming Nexus. What state of mind must a person be in to take on this duty freely?

The close relationship between the three sisters – their father's most precious legacy – is wrecked as they seek out Horatio. Their quest ends in disaster for each of them, and their target survives.

The Merk asks for another volunteer' to continue his work; this time it's Professor Stanislaus Korivitsky. Stan sees Nexus in grand intellectual terms, a personification of the moral tide of history; but what he does not bargain for is the effect of his own basic human impulses. He is unable to cope with the stresss of his new life and becomes insane: he feels no guilt if bystanders are slain as he goes about this work. Horatio feels that it would be better if he resumed the role of Nexus, at whatever cost to his soul, rather than let innocents die.

Partway though this storyline, Rude takes a leave of absence to go back to art school (!). He also takes some time out to work on the *World's Finest* series for DC: First have difficulty finding a replacement, but settle eventually on Hugh Haynes. These personnel problems, common to much of their line, as well as simple profit motives prompt First to cease their monthly line and relaunch their titles as sequences of mini-series, in much the same way that Dark Horse publish *Aliens*. Whether this is a wise move soon becomes academic as the company folds, and in early 1991 *Nexus* is homeless once more.

"BARON AND RUDE MULL OVER THE NECESSARY ELEMENTS: SUPER-POWERS . . . FIGHTS . . . A NEAT COSTUME. THE CHARACTER THAT MATERIALIZES AT THE END IS HORATIO HELLPOP"

KLACKTOVEEDESTEEN

Baron and Rude manage to get by without *Nexus – World's Finest* (written by Dave Gibbons and subsequently collected) is a dream come true for super-hero purists, while Baron has been branching out onto other projects, including *The Punisher* and *The Flash*, for a while now – but us here in Readerland; we miss it so much. . . .

Salvation arrives in the form of Dark Horse; for some reason the thought of publishing a sophisticated, funny, gorgeous book appeals to them and they pick up the option. Horatio returns in *The Origin*, a condensation of the very early issues for the benefit of newcomers, followed by *The Liberator*, with Stefan Pretrucha's story – the only non-Baron script to date – recounting an early adventure. John Calimee's art is in keeping with the visual agenda set by Rude, an effect enhanced by the presence of long-time *Nexus* inker John Nyberg. These serve to whet our appetite for the main event, the what-happened-next – *Nexus: Alien Justice*.

VOOTIE!

Horatio shares the spotlight in the first issue with Dave, his closest friend and a consistent voice of calm when all else seems madness, as they journey to Dave's homeworld in pursuit of the lost past. Dark Horse's intention is to publish *Nexus* as a sequence of mini's – one a year. This means the title should be pure Baron and Rude from now on. Others have done good work on the title, but they are the heart of *Nexus*; they combine to give the stories a fluidity they would not otherwise achieve. Rude's command of his visuals is matched by Baron's juxtaposition of comedy and drama: he delights in mixing serious themes with a charmingly dry sense of humour. The ultimate example of this is the people of

Ylum, as they find a way to develop their fledgling society, sometimes in a disarmingly childlike manner.

A chance to fully join in the *Nexus* parade will arrive later in the year, as Dark Horse begins collecting the Capital/First run as a set of trade paperbacks: it is to be commended for supporting this uniquely attractive series. CW

THE STORY OF HORATIO HELLPOP

Scripts by Mike Baron except where stated

Nexus 1–3, Dec 1981–Oct 1982
Art by Steve Rude
(Collected in the graphic novel *The Original Nexus*, 1985)

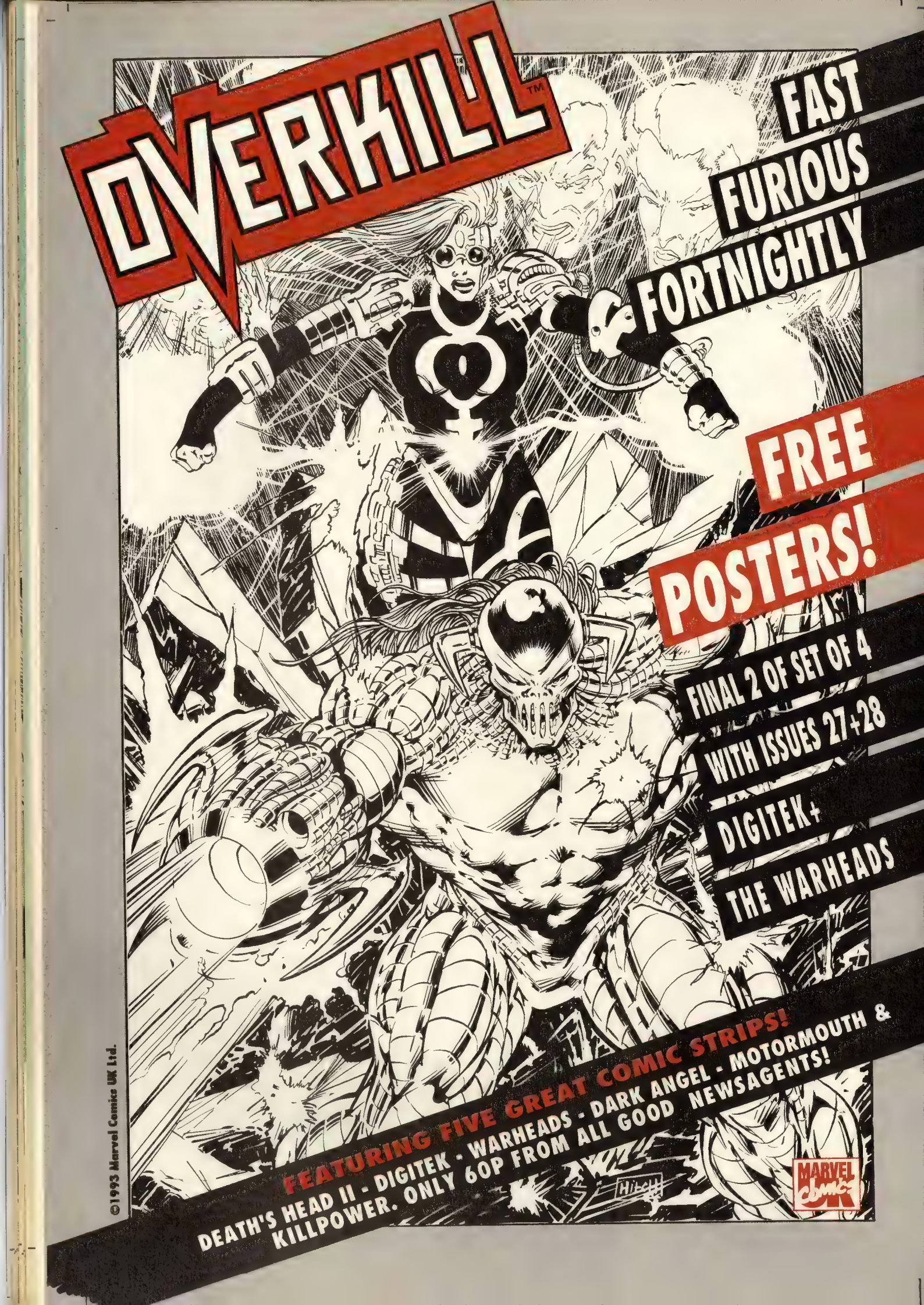
Nexus 1–80, Mar 1983–May 1991
Art by Rude 1–16m 18–22, 24–27, 33–36, 39–42, 45–48, 50, 58–60; Eric Shanower 17; Keith Giffen 23; Mike Mignola 28; Rick Veitch 29; Jose Luis Garcia Lopez 30; Gerald Forton 31; Jackson Guice 32; Paul Smith 37–38, 43–44, 49, 51–55; Spyder 56; Adam Hughes 57; Greg Guler 61–63; Tony Akins 64–65; Mark Heike 66, 69, 71; John K. Snyder III 67; Luke McDonnell 68; Hugh Haynes 70, 72–80 (1–23 reprinted in *Nexus Legends 1–23*, May 1989–Mar 1991)

The Next Nexus 1–4, Jan 1989–Apr 1989
Art by Rude
(Collected in the trade paperback *The Next Nexus*, 1989)

Nexus: The Origin, July 1992
Art by Rude

Nexus The Liberator 1–4, Aug 1992–Nov 1992
Script by Stefan Pretrucha
Art by John Calimee

Nexus: Alien Justice 1–3, Dec 1992–present
Art by Rude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PHIL HALL OF SQUONK COMICS SAID "IT HAS THE FEEL OF THE 1ST REAL NON-PRETENTIOUS DISCUSSION ZINE SINCE FANTASY ADVERTISER" MIKE KIDSON OF ZUM! SAID "MORE SUBSTANTIAL THAN ANY OTHER MAG AROUND"... NEED I GO ON???
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BUT LOOK! THEY'VE SPELT 'WEIRD ASTRAL' WRONG! I'M GOING TO TELL THAT EDITOR WHAT I THINK ABOUT THAT!
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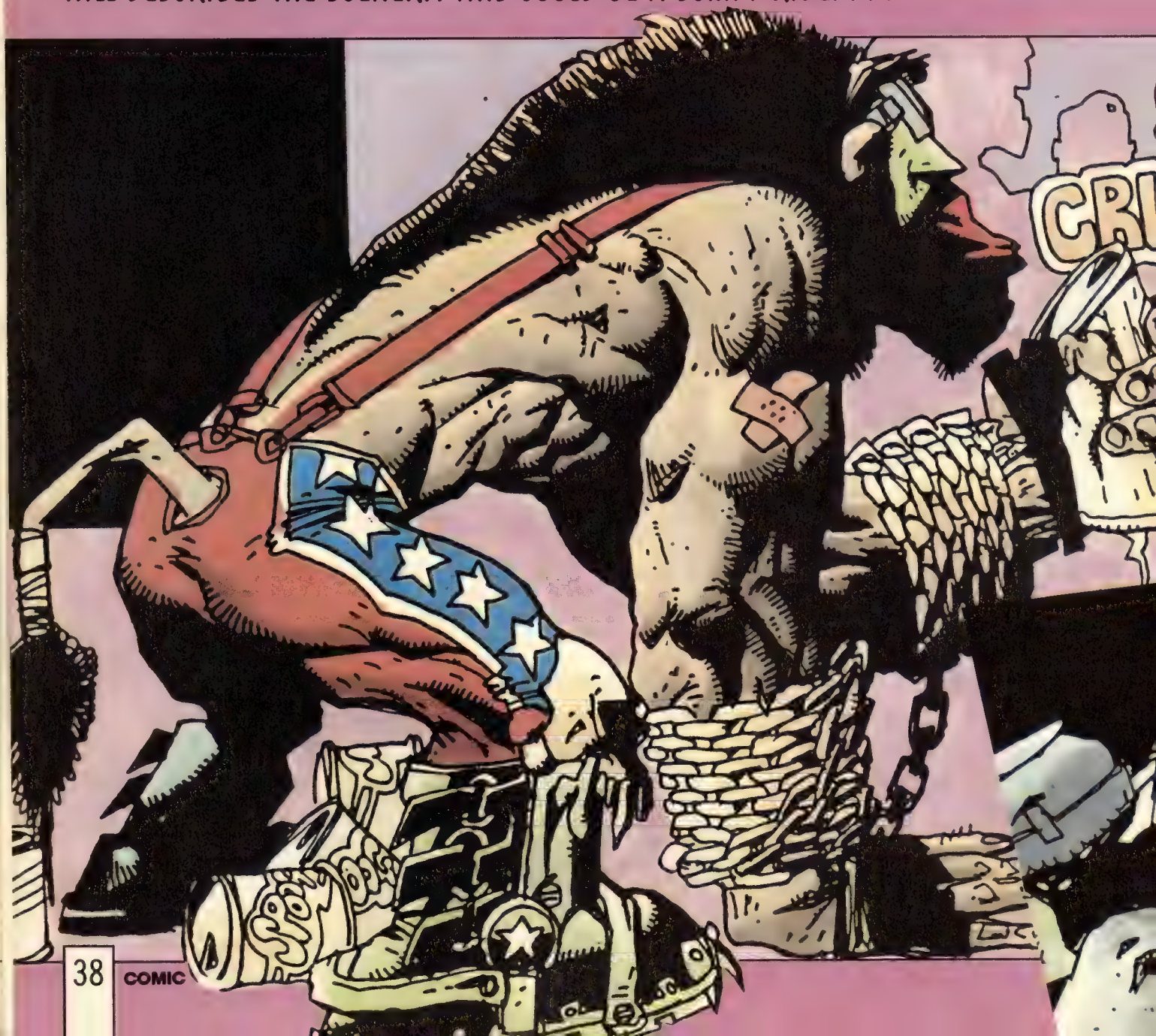
SIMON BISLEY

"I WAS A TEENAGE

FASTEN YOUR SEATBELTS AND HOLD ONTO YOUR HATS AS WE SPEED HEADLONG INTO THE MIND OF A COMIC BOOK LEGEND. THE BIZ IS AT THE WHEEL, SMITH NAVIGATES, HILL DESCRIBES THE SCENERY. THIS COULD BE A BUMPY RIDE. . . .



"I LION TAMER!"

Oh, we know all about Simon Bisley; we've read the comics. How hard is Bisley? He's THAT 'ard. He eats the likes of Lobo for lunch and laughs in the face of barbarians...

EHRRRRR! That's the WRONG answer. Before we progress any further Simon makes one thing crystal clear: "When I go to a convention, it ain't Lobo, it ain't Slaine." 'Ooh you look like Slaine! Ooh you look like Lobo!' He's heard it all.

"I'm not my art; I'm just Simon Bisley. Who he is, what he looks like, is not important; it's the work that's important. Let's put it this way: I could get a mate of mine to go to a convention and call himself Simon Bisley, and people would go, 'Aaahh!' These people might really hate me if they knew me. They obviously like my work, and that's a real compliment."

It's our pleasure. We appreciate the skill and care invested in these pages. We like the vigour and the humour; and the articulate depiction of extreme violence, naturally. Work of quality and distinction tells us much about the personality of its artist, but it isn't enough for many people. Sometimes you want a piece of the artist himself; sometimes you forget he's really just another guy – an ordinary Joe who just happens to have become one of the hottest properties in comics since those early Slaine pages. A man with a history which is about to be revealed. Or maybe not.

THE ROAR OF THE GREASEPAINT...

"I used to work in a circus, years ago, as an apprentice lion tamer; but my leg was badly mauled by this lion. He was quite an old one; his name was Clarence [laughs]. This is true – I was in hospital for a while, and while I was laying there, with the threat of my leg possibly being amputated, I thought, 'Why don't you take up drawing? 'Cause you can draw, you're quite good.

"So I started drawing super-heroes for a laugh: I was in hospital for at least five years, and in that time I found I'd developed a nice little technique and style. And this doctor, right? He knew this agent... no, it's serious, it is. He was an agent to an art editor, and he suggested that I show some of my work to him; I did, and it took off from there – record companies approached me..." Or:

"It was Titan Books – actually it was Mark Cox who looked at my work first, and suggested that I went to Fleetway and various other companies. Pat Mills saw some and offered me some work on the spot. And ever since then I've been probably the best artist working in comics today." He laughs again.

"But I'd like to get back to lion taming eventually. Obviously there are groups who are very much against it, but I don't feel any remorse at all. Every now and then I look in the cupboard, and see my glittery overalls that I used to wear, during training, my chair and that. It's a bit sad, I suppose...

"So that's how I got into it. It's only a very short time ago, only about five years. The thing has accelerated so quickly, and you're put on a pedestal after only a very short time: you think, 'Good God, I'm famous, people want my work,' and I'm thinking, 'Hold on a minute, give us a chance.' It all went out of hand, as it were."

...THE SMELL OF THE CROWD

"The thing is, I don't like all that adulation. It's nice to hear, 'You're quite a good artist, shame you didn't take up lion taming,' but, y'know...

"I wish sometimes I was a bit more underground – you always have to compete, and you have to produce your best. And there's a lot of pressure in that respect – having to do interviews and things like that. D'you know what I mean? I want to be one of the boys, one of the lads, just muck in with the rest of them."

The strength of Bisley's following has meant that he now enjoys an impressive reputation in the industry. "...I think it's justified [laughs]. No, it's obvious, it must be justified – I know I'm good and everything else. I've always avoided doing interviews, and I've always avoided – what's the word...? Self-publicity and being pretentious like that: I'm just me and always have been me, and I'll just continue to do what I'm doing. I think my work speaks for itself."

Few fan favourites can hold on to their popularity indefinitely: time moves on and tastes change, careers wax and wane. Is Bisley concerned about this? "You only fall out of favour if you stick in the same groove, and you don't progress

Art © Simon Bisley unless otherwise stated

anywhere. Nothing I've done has ever been formularised, but I never sit down and think, 'This is the way I should go.' I take everything naturally and progressively.

"The attitude to take is to always be the innovator. I remember someone said to me [prior to *Judgement On Gotham*], 'You can't do Batman, 'cause the bubble's burst.' Now I think that's very defeatist; you do Batman, and you should be the one to recreate the bubble. You can always bring something new – Blitzkrieg The Manic Mandrill is only a progression of Lobo, a progression of that type of character. He's more extreme.

"I don't plan anything. I don't know what the character's about: it just comes naturally as it progresses, and you respond to the reactions you get. If it don't work, it don't work, so you stop doing it."

ATOMEKAVERSE

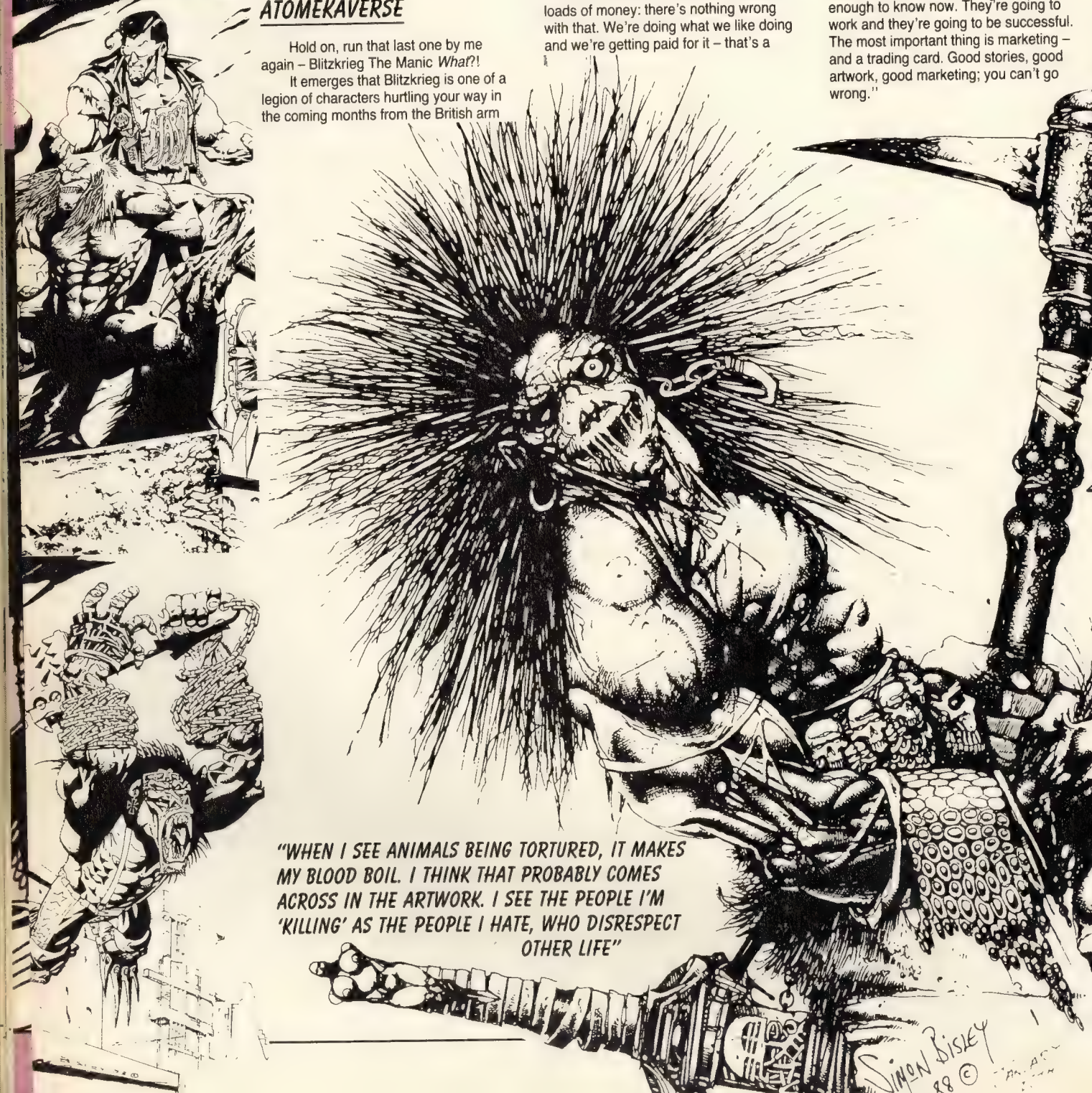
Hold on, run that last one by me again – Blitzkrieg The Manic *What*?!

It emerges that Blitzkrieg is one of a legion of characters hurtling your way in the coming months from the British arm of the Turtle-funded Tundra empire, recently renamed Atomeka to confirm the markedly different direction Dave Elliot and crew are heading in, compared to their sibling company in the States, and to stop everyone getting so gosh-darned confused about who is bringing out what. Some of the material you'll know about if you read the Atomeka piece in *Comic World 12*, and very lovely it looks too; but they're not finished with you yet. There are still grander plans being laid: "What's emerging is a super-hero universe, an Atomeka Universe. What we're doing this year is creating the backbone from which everything is going to come up. I think it's quite exciting; potentially we've got a whole universe like Image is creating – we're probably working along the same lines as them."

Oh great, just what we need. Forgive my cyncism, but is this not so much jumping on the current big bucks bandwagon? "Hey – of course it is, but it's a business and we want to make shit loads of money: there's nothing wrong with that. We're doing what we like doing and we're getting paid for it – that's a bonus, isn't it? We're not jumping on the bandwagon – we're already on it. I'm the driver of the bandwagon."

Although, for many of us, muscle-bound super-guys were our first loves, only some turn that initial flirtation into a relationship that stands the test of time; while some look back on that first gauche infatuation with embarrassment, as they promenade down the avenue arm-in-arm with *Cerebus* or *Eightball*, others jilted comics entirely and took up with women. For those who have tired of Y-front adventurers, The Atomeka Universe holds out the promise of a new approach. It has some powerful assets in its favour – the sumptuous artwork of Garry Leach; two of the biggest imaginations in comics in Ian Edginton and Warren Ellis; and Simon Bisley. The products of these minds will soon be cavorting before you provocatively. Will you give them a second look?

"Hopefully these characters are going to work; I think I'm experienced enough to know now. They're going to work and they're going to be successful. The most important thing is marketing – and a trading card. Good stories, good artwork, good marketing; you can't go wrong."


"WHEN I SEE ANIMALS BEING TORTURED, IT MAKES MY BLOOD BOIL. I THINK THAT PROBABLY COMES ACROSS IN THE ARTWORK. I SEE THE PEOPLE I'M 'KILLING' AS THE PEOPLE I HATE, WHO DISRESPECT OTHER LIFE"
SIMON BISLEY 88 ©

▲ *Judgement on Gotham*
© *DC Comics*
◀ *Early Bisley – pre-ABC Warriors*

Blitzkrieg is one of the Bisley characters destined for life on Earth Atomeka. "Basically what he is, is . . . I've no idea at all."

TODAY'S BLITZKRIEG ORIGIN

Cut to some time later: Bisley's has been spinning a delirious stream-of-consciousness yarn of an African mandrill who's taken to America, kept in a cage, and subjected to chemical and biological experiments in order to boost his intelligence. "I do have my ideas . . . but even during this conversation, I'll decide what ideas will develop. Being an artist, it works on purely visual grounds."

We are flabbergasted. We want more. "There's a guy called Mal, and he's a psychopathic biker; and he's at the blood bank – he's got a strain in his blood and they want to study it. This guy's a criminal . . . this is in a penitentiary. This bloody big bloke, chains round the neck. He's a nutter – he's a cannibal as well, by the way, and an ex-tiger trainer. He gives the blood, and they put it in the fridge with 'Mal' written on it, his number and code."

Meanwhile, the mandrill is in a laboratory where his only friend, Mary, is working on improving his communication skills. "As a reward, Mary always gives the mandrill a little drink from the fridge, a little sachet of grapefruit juice. He likes that.

"There's something that they've done in creating this sub-human species, linked very closely between ape and man. They know if he has any human tissue in his own bloodstream, it can accelerate the whole process.

"There's some kind of disruption; the mandrill's got the key, he's out of the cage. He panics, he sees a door, he sees the *entrance*, he **runs**, he gets OUT. He scuttles off into New York, the Bronx.

"He gets in the penitentiary; he's real thirsty, he wants a drink. He gets into the laboratory and sees this fridge: he says, 'Mary,' in his mind. F*** me, he only *drinks Mal's blood!*"

Uh-oh. "You know what's going to happen, don't you? The metamorphosis erupts: he becomes half-baboon, half-**biker**! Half-PSYCHOPATHIC-CANNIBALISTIC-BIKER!

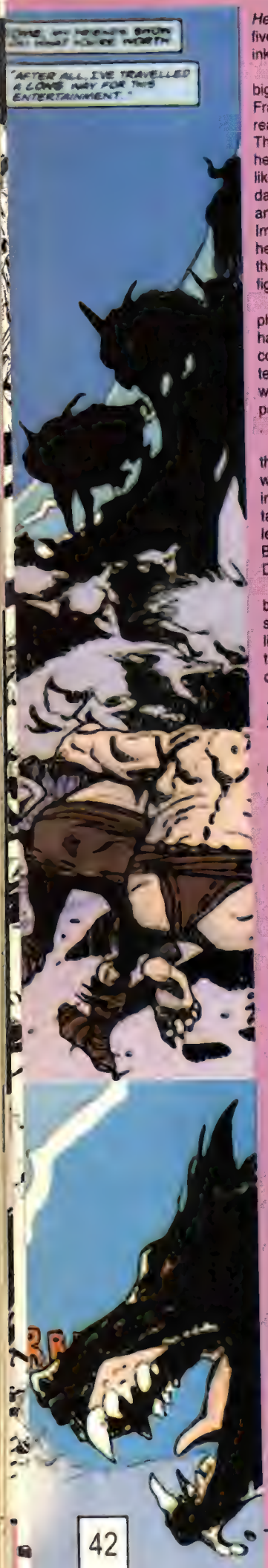
"He's going to be some kind of loner: he's going to be meaner than Wolverine . . . he'll kick the crap out of Wolverine and his zentennium bones, yeah?"

The origin you'll see in the comic may be nothing like this, but what the heck: this is the joy of creating comics, making up crazy ideas and rolling with them just for the hell of it. It may still have this loose, kinetic feel, or the bumps may be ironed out. "It depends on the writer: but when I draw it and I get the right writer, people know what to expect, don't they? All hell breaks loose. Blitzkrieg The Manic Mandrill, chains up each f***ing arm, a huge great oversized ratchet as a weapon. He's very Lobo-esque in a lot of ways, more like Bisley-esque."

MAXMUM CARNAGE

"Max Carnage was a visual character . . . someone wanted to do a cover, I think it was *A1*: [*Yeah, Book 4 - Ed*] they said, 'Do what you like,' so I did this character who would become Max Carnage, but wasn't at the time. As things developed with Dave [Elliot] at Tundra UK, we talked about it and I said. 'What do you feel about writing a character?' He said, 'Okay,' and he came up with the name Max Carnage. We did this thing for

"WE'RE NOT JUMPING ON THE BANDWAGON – WE'RE ALREADY ON IT. I'M THE DRIVER OF THE BANDWAGON"



Heavy Metal Hardware – I think it was a five-pager [to appear in May] – which he inked. I did a cover for that as well.

"He's changed a lot: he's a lot bigger, and I see him as a cross between Frankenstein's Monster and Robocop, real monolithic. We decided that he is Thor, he is immortal. On his own planet, he's fighting these sabre-demons; they're like sabre-tooth tigers – harks back to my days of lion taming. He's high on this cliff, and his arm gets ripped out of its socket. Imagine, [he was holding] the hammer, he's lost his power. His hammer is thousands of feet up on the cliff face, fighting these f***king things.

"And this hammer comes plummetting down, splits a mountain in half, and almost goes to the very Earth's core. Creates huge tidal waves, it's like ten nuclear bombs going off: villages wiped out, just 'cause of the unrestrained power. But of course, he's lost his power . . . he's lost his purpose.

"He ends up in the future; he goes through all sorts of experiences, forgets who he was in the first place and ends up in New York . . . he recollects his past and talks about being Thor. He's become the leader of this group – Praying Mantis, Blitzkrieg, and this other character Dave's developed called Marky.

"There's backbones within backbones again: we've got the structure, but at the same time, there's little ribcages growing off it into other bits, there's other groups of characters developing from that spinal cord."

THE REST OF MY LIFE

"We've literally, just in this discussion, planned out our entire working careers, do you realise that? We're never going to have time for anything else. By the time I've developed [Blitzkrieg] and other characters, I'll be f***ing fifty, successful and earning some money from all the derivatives of what we're talking about. You don't know where it's going to go, do you?

"It's pretty exciting, though I don't like to map it all out. You want to be a little over the edge, because you don't want to see the future, or you've already lived your life. You never know what's going to happen: next week the company might fold. I might die. That's it; 'He couldn't drum but f*** me, he could tame lions.' They'll bury me in my glitter."

REAL LIFE

"I don't go and sit down and read books, because it's like reading someone else's imagination, or reading someone else's thoughts; it's like watching a soap opera. That's not real, it's only someone else's ideas. Instead of reading a book for an hour, or all day, I'd rather sit there with my eyes closed and make up my own stories out of my own head; I've got my own ideas. I prefer reading factual stuff – I'm going to sound lie a hippy here – about the universe. I like reading about factual things, weird traits in animals and history; I'm intrigued by it. I like looking at Victorian photographs, and reading about the people who lived then; looking at the pictures, looking at the way they lived. I could sit and study for ages, say, a picture of New York City in 1914, and there's a little kid stepping onto the sidewalk, looking at the camera; frozen, for that one second. I'm thinking, 'Jesus, who was that kid, where was she born, what did she do? Where was she going?'

"I like reading about some old boy's war exploits, real factual shit that's interesting, y'know? There's a very good book by Joanna Lumley [*Forces Sweethearts*] which was really intriguing. It was, like, this bloke who was in the war, writing to his children about how deeply he loved them, and that he knew he was going to die. He was saying, 'Never speak badly of anyone because you [will] never make friends.' You could see how much this soldier loved his family, so very deeply . . . two months later he was posted somewhere and he died.

"I'm also intrigued by the S.S. and Hitler; I just can't grasp that this happened. [I've seen] horrific illustrations. People have got to know about this sort of shit.

"I'm really concerned about the world: I ponder things like that for ages, but in the end I draw something like *Terminator 2* shooting up people mercilessly. It can work in different ways. Am I visually supporting that sort of horrific picture? Or is it like an oppressive thing that I'm getting out of my system, because I feel aggressive about this shit that happened, that I draw images like that?

"Where some people sit down and pray, maybe I get aggressive about disrespect for fellow men and creatures; when I see animals being tortured, it make my blood boil. I think that probably comes across in the artwork. I see the people I'm 'killing' as the people I hate, who disrespect other life.

"At the same time I'm contradicting it totally, 'cause I'm 'killing' what's killing something else, so what the hell's the difference? Maybe I'm some kind of suppressed super-hero. A super-hero is valid in a lot of respects, because at least they're kicking some arse, y'know?"

"I SEE [MAX CARNAGE] AS A CROSS BETWEEN FRANKSTEIN'S MONSTER AND ROBOCOP, REAL MONOLITHIC"

THE MELTING ENGINE

This may seem like swerving off-course a bit, but bear with me. Dominic Diamond – fast becoming the public face of computer gaming, God help us – was on a Radio 4 programme recently, defending the current 16 bit obsession to disapproving grown-ups. He included a brief interview with Alan Moore, who had the interesting thought that computer games have become the cultural underclass of society – they occupy the ghetto once inhabited by comics, before some guy came up with the term 'graphic novel' and the medium had conferred upon it the (admittedly slight) respectability it enjoys now.

This may or may not mean that we can all have a good laugh at games console owners now – how many Nintendo players does it take to change a light bulb? – but there are still enough people looking down their noses at comics to go round: and we know where they can put their snobbishness. Who has the right to say which of the media are worthwhile? We'll enjoy everything we can, thank you. "Anything that's good, it's like music. I like heavy metal – [*tedious muso voice*] 'HEAV-Y MET-AL' –

but I'll listen to classical music, anything that moves me. All forms of art: you've got to have an open mind. What makes a piece of art work? Whether it be music, visual art. . .

"It's like, 'That painting is shit!' Now that painting has worked. Why? Because it's got a *reaction*. Hate, repulsion, love, any kind of emotion, if it stirs something in you, it's worked.

"It depends on what your perception of art is: if you chuck lots of paint about, really abstract form blah blah blah, they call it Modern Art. Anyone can be an artist. If I said to you, 'Look at that cup of coffee you put down on that table' – that has become art, purely on the grounds that you have observed it as art. It's the relationship of the cup to everything else in the room that makes it art. So we're all artists; and the best artists in the world are kids, because they're totally unpretentious. They draw what they feel. They're perfect Expressionists; they're not interested in where the eyes and ears go.

"That's why I don't take the piss out of people who put lumps of bricks together, or take a load of goatshit, make cast of it and put it in the Tate, beause the artists are just taking the piss. It's the people who buy this art, or call themselve art critics who can't justify themselves if they haven't discovered something new. They've got to go out and find an engine melting or a piece of wood covered in barbed wire, and say, 'Look, this is art, the world is art,' to justify themselves. That's why comic strip art – and some of the covers people do are really good f***king art – is never going to be taken seriously, because it's obvious it's good. It's not discovering anything new.

"THE BEST ARTISTS IN THE WORLD ARE KIDS THEY'RE TOTALLY UNPRETENTIOUS. THEY DRAW WHAT THEY FEEL"

In next month's clunk click conclusion, Simon Bisley talks about ***Death Dealer. Melting Pot*** *and those Bisley clones. Plus: who's stronger – Slaine or Conan?*

MIKE NOBLE

ALTHOUGH MIKE NOBLE HAS WORKED IN COMICS FOR 40 YEARS, A NEW GENERATION OF FANS WILL BE SEEING HIS WORK ON 'FIREBALL XL5' FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE PAGES OF THUNDERBIRDS. THE COMIC SHORTLY, HAVING ALREADY PRODUCED POSTERS AND COVERS FOR BOTH THUNDERBIRDS POSTER MAGAZINE AND STINGRAY. THE COMIC, HIS FIRST WORK IN COMICS FOR SOME YEARS. STEVE HOLLAND AND BILL STORIE TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY OF HIS RETURN TO LOOK BACK OVER MIKE'S CAREER.

FROM A

Fireball XL5, Zero X and Captain Scarlet
© ITC Entertainment Group Ltd.
Space 1999, The Tomorrow People, The Man From Atlantis and Worzel Gummidge used by arrangement.

TO XL5!

MIKE NOBLE

Mike Noble's work will be known to more collectors than they may realise. British anonymity may mean you don't recognise the name but you will know his work; perhaps you remember 'Timeslip', 'Follyfoot', 'The Tomorrow People' or 'Space 1999' for Look-In *in the 1970s, or 'Fireball XL5' or 'Zero X' for* TV Century 21 *in the 1960s? Perhaps even 'The Lone Ranger' for* TV Comic *or* Express Weekly *before that?*

Mike Noble was amongst the group of artists who provided TV Century 21 *with a stream of classic colour artwork during the 1960s, a master of hardware and airbrushed space-scapes, he was ranked alongside Ron Embleton and Eric Eden in the early issues, bringing Gerry Anderson's space-faring marionettes to life. Having proved his mastery of science fiction, he was equally at home with the more down to earth drama of 'Follyfoot' and 'Black Beauty' – two of the most popular wonder-horse shows of the seventies.*

Mike was educated at South West Essex Tech. & School of Art, and at St. Martin's in London. "When I left, I worked in an advertising studio in Holborn prior to my compulsary Nation Service in 1949," he recalls. "I acquired a taste for illustration of a more adventurous kind whilst in the drawing office of the 8th Royal Tank Regiment and spent quite a bit of time drawing tanks and military hardware."

Returning to civilian life, he gained a position at the Billy Cooper Studio in Oxford Street which specialised in fashion drawing, cartooning and magazine illustration. "I worked under an artist called Leslie Caswell [*a noted fashion illustrator who later drew strips for the* Daily Herald] for about a year, learning the rudiments of strip illustration, and was able after a time to do my own artwork for publication through contacts acquired by my employer."

His first strip work was the half-page black & white 'Simon and Sally' in *Robin* and a regular weekly editorial illustration, 'Life With Sally', about a teenage girl, for *Woman* in 1953. In 1959 he began a two year run on 'The Lone Ranger' in *Express Weekly*, which later transferred to *TV Comic*. He continued to draw the strip for fifteen months before launching a new western adventure, 'The Range Rider' in 1961. He followed the latter with humourous strips for *TV Comic* which

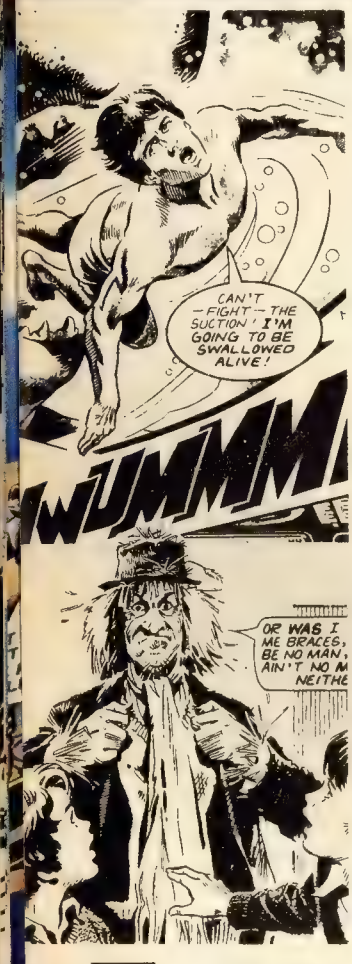
KEEP ON HIS TRAIL - HE MAY LEAD US TO THE NETWORK'S HEADQUARTERS!
DEAD MEN..?
YE GODS! THEY'RE ROBOTS! CYBERNETIC HUMANOIDS!
SINCE WHEN HAVE WE CHICKENED OUT ON THAT SCORE? COME ON - LET'S JAUNT TO THE SPOT WE LAST SAW THEM AND TAKE THE CONSEQUENCES!

included 'Popeye' in full colour for the front cover and 'Beetle Bailey' in black & white.

But it is his association with *TV Century 21* that showed Noble as a master of the space hardware strip. His work appeared within the first few issues, first adapting Gerry Anderson's string-driven 'Fireball XL5', showing a natural ability to draw military and scientific spaceware and adding a dynamic and colourful realism to the sometimes static puppet faces. Noble used photographic reference constantly for Steve Zodiac and his crew: "I always endeavoured to keep as close to the likeness of the characters as possible. For the Gerry Anderson series I gave the characters more realism that the puppets on TV, which the editor allowed – after all, it was worth taking advantage of the flexibility of drawing over the constraints imposed by the TV screen. The smaller the figure, the easier the task became because only the main features needed emphasising and if they were dark or fair, tall or short, fat or thin, this was enough for identification."

The emphasis placed these days on fully painted artwork ignores the fact that there were many great colour artists producing comic strips in the UK as early as the 1930s when photogravure printing was first used for *Mickey Mouse Weekly*. The gravure printing threw up its own problems: "I draw in pencil on CS10 (Bristol 4) board and finish in black indian ink," says Noble. "When I was drawing

"IT WAS WORTH TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE FLEXIBILITY OF DRAWING OVER THE CONSTRAINTS IMPOSED BY THE TV SCREEN"



for *TV 21* I was obliged to use a set list of coloured inks as the printers in those days required it for the gravure press. Nowadays you can use more or less anything, but I continued to use coloured inks for many years as they seemed to give the best results. I did have a problem on one occasion when I first started 'Fireball XL5': the indigo ink which I used for the space background contained – unknown to me – an element of black in it which, when reproduced, turned into a nasty grey colour like washing up water. Needless to say, I switched to Prussian Blue pretty quickly!"

Noble quickly developed a weekly routine for producing his richly coloured pages: "First I made sure that I had all the references I required for the particular episode I was working on. Then I would sketch out where each frame would go on the two pages, allowing for large, panoramic views in some, or facial close-ups in others, pencil in roughly the characters from the script frame by frame, working out where the speech balloons would go and whether I had room for everything that was required. When I was satisfied with that I would do all the detailed pencil drawing with shading and deep shadows up to finished standard. Both pages being done, I would then ink in with black ink and rule the frames with a ruling pen. Any airgun spraying would be done next – space, skies if required, and finally each frame would be coloured in seperately until the job was completed.

"I would allow roughly two days for each stage of the work – pencilling, inking, and colouring – but the length of time taken would often depend on whether the story had crowds of people in it or lots of complicated looking machinery or buildings to draw. Obviously if the story one week depicted a spaceship and crew stranded in the desert or on a bare planet with quite a few close-ups of the characters, then that was comparatively quick and easy. Six days would be the average for a double page spread and about four days for black and white. Often the coloured inks required three or four coats to bring the colour up to the strength we wanted. Also, I'm not the world's quickest artist!"

MIKE NOBLE STRIPOGRAPHY

Simon and Sally (in *Robin*, 1953-58)
The Lone Ranger and Tonto (in *Express Weekly 205-293*, 23 Aug 1958-11 Jun 1960, by Robin Sherwood)
The Lone Ranger (in *TV Comic 444-507*, 18 Jun 1960-2 Sep 1961)
The Range Rider (in *TV Comic 508-557?*, 9 Sep 1961-Aug 1962?)
Popeye (in *TV Comic*, c1963)
Beetle Bailey (in *TV Comic*, c1964)
Fireball XL5 (in *TV Century 21 #6-39,44-86,90-100*, 27 Feb-16 Oct 1965, 20 Nov 1965-10 Sep 1966, 8 Oct-17 Dec 1966, 21 Jan-11 Feb 1967, by Tod Sullivan)
Zero X (in *TV Century 21 #105-130,135-154,197-241*, 21 Jan-15 Jul 1967, 19 Aug-30 Dec 1967, 26 Oct 1968-30 Aug 1969, by Angus Allan)
Captain Scarlet (in *TV 21 #158-166,172-179,182-184,187-189,194-196*, 27 Jan-23 Mar 1968, 4 May-22 Jun 1968, 13 Jul-27 Jul 1968, 17 Aug-31 Aug 1968, 5 Oct-19 Oct 1968, by Angus Allan)
Project S.W.O.R.D. (illustration, in *TV 21 #187*, 17 Aug 1968, stories by Angus Allan)
Star Trek (in *TV 21 & Joe 90 #33-57*, 9 May 1970-24 Oct 1970)
Timeslip (in *Look-In*, 9 Jan-3 Jul 1971)
The Freewheelers (illustrations, in *Look-In*, 24 Apr-15 May 1971)
Follyfoot (in *Look-In*, 10 Jul 1971-13 Oct 1973, 24 Nov 1973-18 May 1974)
The Adventures of Black Beauty (in *Look-In*, 1 Jun-9 Nov 1974, 7 Dec 1974-11 Jan 1975, 5 Jul-6 Sep 1975)
Kung Fu (in *Look-In*, 8 Feb-15 Mar 1975)
The Tomorrow People (in *Look-In*, 13 Sep-27 Sep 1975, 15 Oct 1975-24 Jan 76, 2 Apr 77-18 Feb 1978)
Space 1999 (in *Look-In*, 31 Jan-30 Oct 1976, by Angus Allan)
The Man From Atlantis (in *Look-In*, 25 Feb-15 Jul 1978)
The Famous Five (in *Look-In*, 22 Jul 1978-2 Feb 1980)
Worzel Gummidge (in *Look-In*, 9 Feb 1980-11 Sep 1981, by Angus Allan)
Into the Labyrinth (in *Look-In*, 18 Sep-18 Dec 1982)
Star Fleet (in *Look-In*, 8 Jan-13 Aug 1983)
Robin of Sherwood (in *Look-In*, 28 Apr-18 Aug 1984, 29 Sep 1984-8 Jun 1985, 20 Jul-24 Aug 1985, 12 Oct 1985-20 Sep 1986. Some episodes coloured by Arthur Ranson)

ZERO X

During his time with *TV 21*, Noble would draw the adventures of 'Zero X'; for those not familiar with the future envisaged by Gerry Anderson, the Zero X was the first manned spacecraft to land on Mars, as revealed in the 1966 movie, *Thunderbirds Are Go!*. On a later Zero X mission to Mars, SPECTRUM agent Captain Black mistakingly destroys a deserted alien city – only to precipitate an alien war-of-nerves, as seen in the series *Captain Scarlet*, which Mike also drew. When the later *Joe 90* comic met with less success than its older companions (*TV 21* and *Lady Penelope* were selling 1.3 million copies a week at their peak!), Noble appeared in the relaunched *TV 21 & Joe 90* with a brief run on their *Star Trek* strip before moving to the newly founded *Look-In* which featured adaptations of TV shows from Independent Television, and for whom Noble drew everything from 'Follyfoot' and 'The Adventures of Black Beauty' to 'The Tomorrow People', 'Space 1999' and 'Worzel Gummidge'. Various family health problems hastened his decision to retire from comic strips in the 1980s, concentrating his efforts on more lucrative magazine covers and advertising.

Having drawn so many strips over the years, Mike finds it difficult to decide which is his favourite, saying "I tend to make the work on hand as enjoyable as possible and hope that the readers enjoy it too. If pressed, I think it would be 'Captain Scarlet' and 'Zero X' in *TV 21* and 'Follyfoot' and 'Worzel Gummidge' in *Look-In* – but I might change my mind tomorrow."

The regular weekly production schedule on British comics allowed little time for artists to meet up – and in many cases the usual anonymity of the strips meant that few artists knew who their contemporaries were anyway. Noble however rated two of his co-workers on *TV Century 21* highly: "Ron Embleton and Frank Bellamy had an influence on my work. When I was younger I really admired Alex Raymond's work on 'Rip Kirby' in the *Daily Mail*. I think many of us did."

Were their any strips he would have liked to have drawn?

"I rather fancied doing 'Thunderbirds' but I never got the opportunity." Until recently, that is, having now drawn covers and posters for the new *Thunderbirds* comic. American style superhero comics are not, however, such an attraction: "I don't know if my style is robust enough for Superman! I have done a similar character for a Nat West Bank publication called *Our World*."

The return to Thunderbirds and his return to comic strips is unlikely to tempt him out of retirement full time, however: "I'm doing a little commission work just now," he says, "paintings of local landscapes, houses and such like, so I've not committed myself to anything specific yet, but I certainly won't rule it out." CW

WARNING! THIS COMPETITION COULD CHANGE YOUR LIFE!

The London Cartoon Centre has been running courses since 1985 and is recognised throughout the industry as a training ground for hot new talent. Now we are offering an **exclusive Competition** to win a ten week course at the centre under professional tuition to learn all aspects of cartoon and comic strip art. The course encompasses figure drawing, lettering, script writing, composition, small press projects, inking - everything you'll need to become a mover and shaker in the best profession around!

in association with the london Cartoon Centre, Comic World presents the ULTIMATE competition

The course runs two full days each week for ten weeks, at the Conlan Street Studios of the LCC. The next available course begins on May 5th, hence the tight deadline on this competition. However, to make the competition as open as possible, our winner will have the option of taking the October course, or a postal course.

A **fantastic** prize like this requires a special competition, and so what you have to do to win is send us some artwork - just one page so you can spend some time on it. The subject?

Win a TEN WEEK COURSE at the London Cartoon Centre!

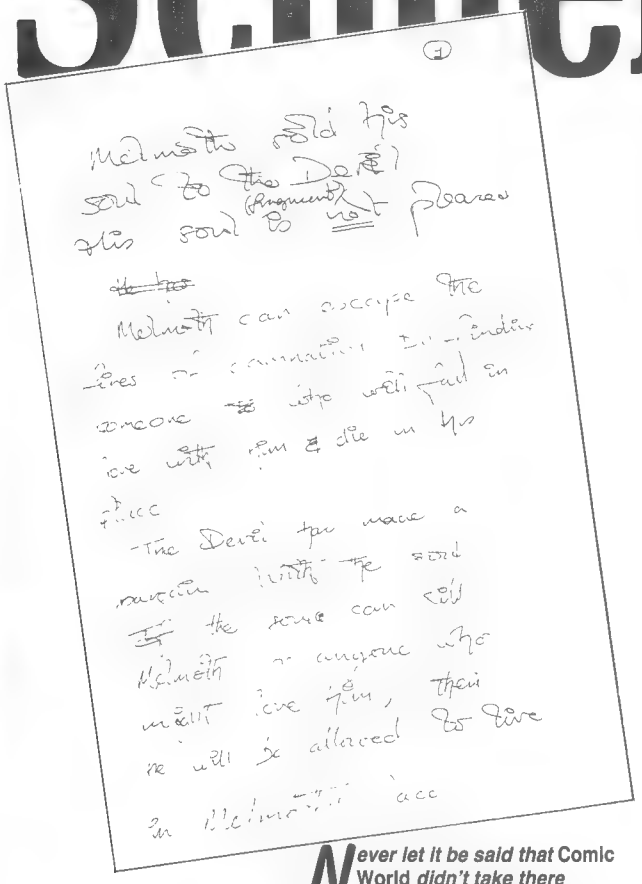
We want you to revamp or update an existing character to your own style or design. *There's only one rule.* **Don't swipe!** Every entry will be passed through the LCC Swipe File Computer and will immediately reject rip-offs. The judge for the competition will be Steve Marchant, course-co-ordinator at the LCC and your deadline is Friday April 30th.

Send your pictures to COMIC WORLD, LCC COMPETITION, 97 HIGH STREET, COLCHESTER CO1 1TH. DONT FORGET TO INCLUDE YOUR NAME, ADDRESS AND A DAYTIME TELEPHONE NUMBER.

GOOD LUCK!

NICK VINCE AND MARK BUCKINGHAM SHOULD NEED NO INTRODUCTIONS: WARHEADS, HELLRAISER AND NIGHT BREED ARE JUST THREE OF NICK'S WRITING CREDITS, AND YOU WILL HAVE SEEN MARK'S ARTWORK GRACING HELLBLAZER, MIRACLEMAN AND THE CURRENT DEATH: THE HIGH COST OF LIVING (AND IF YOU WANT MORE, DIG OUT ISSUES 9 AND 12 FOR INTERVIEWS). THE TWO ARE ABOUT TO EMBARK ON A NEW SERIES FOR THE MARVEL FRONTIER COMICS LINE, IMMORTALIS, WHICH OFFERS US THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO QUIZ THEM ABOUT SOME OF THE ETERNAL QUESTIONS OF COMICDOM: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM, HOW DO YOU PUT THEM DOWN ON PAPER, AND HOW IMPORTANT IS A FRIENDLY EDITOR.

The Road to Schnectady*



Never let it be said that** Comic World **didn't take there interviewees to all the best places. Here are two top industry men perched on stools in the kitchenette of the Sketch Club in London, the furthest point from the bar possible without leaving the building. If that's not enough to put them on edge, they have a list of questions in front of them which would leave anyone sweating. We've covered characters in some detail over the past couple of months – so what about the physical process of writing?

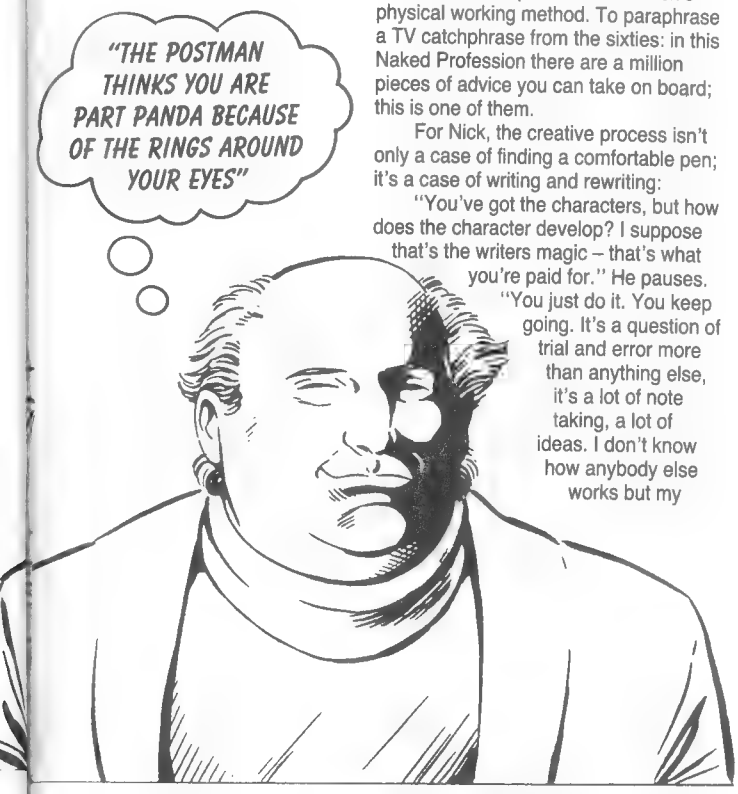
"How do you go about it? Well, you sit down with a pen and paper," informs Nick Vince. "I do have a word processor, and used to do a lot of creating at the keyboard. I also did a lot of falling asleep at the keyboard, because I spent so much time in front of the screen. So I bought a fountain pen, after I'd tried biros, fibre pens and pencils. A decent propelling pencil has the advantage that you can rub out, rather than cross out, a line you don't like. That can make your notes easier to read. However, I settled for a fountain pen as I found the nib flows so smoothly over the paper – and I've been known to re-instate lines I've previously crossed out."

What's all this about? What sort of advice is this? Believe me, it's useful.

Writing is a very intense business, and most people forget that the writing of a comic book isn't a simple process of coming up with an idea and it magically appearing in print some months later. Comics go through four main stages before they ever see an artist, the simplified version running along the lines of: laying around dreaming up ideas (the fun bit), then working and reworking of ideas into some cohesive and legible form (which might be the most creative period, and the point where the story is most uniquely the writers own work); then comes the leg-work, sending it out or taking it around to editors and publishers looking for a buyer. It's at the point of acceptance that the whole process shifts up a couple of gears: there are other fingers in your unique pie, and everything that has been bubbling away on the slow burner, maybe for months, suddenly comes to the boil. Now you have deadlines to meet.

A lot of writing is done in long, highly intense, sustained sessions which may take you to the wee hours of the morning. Many, perhaps most, writers see midnight from the wrong side to the degree where the milkman becomes a close personal friend, and the postman thinks you are part panda because of the rings around your eyes. That's par for the course, and something you will have to face; and if you are serious about writing you are going to face this sort of life for years before you become so expert that nobody need speak of deadlines in the same room. Publishers issue deadlines for the simple reason that readers want their monthly fix on time; you run late and you risk losing even your most loyal fans.

That intensity means that you really do need to find a way of making life as



comfortable as possible, and that means a method of writing that you are happy with, hence our question about Nick's physical working method. To paraphrase a TV catchphrase from the sixties: in this Naked Profession there are a million pieces of advice you can take on board; this is one of them.

For Nick, the creative process isn't only a case of finding a comfortable pen; it's a case of writing and rewriting:

"You've got the characters, but how does the character develop? I suppose that's the writers magic – that's what you're paid for." He pauses. "You just do it. You keep going. It's a question of trial and error more than anything else, it's a lot of note taking, a lot of ideas. I don't know how anybody else works but my problem is that as I'm writing a paragraph, my mind is working so quickly I'm about eight pages ahead. I've worked it all out, but by the time I get there I've forgotten half of it – so I have a note pad to one side and I make jottings.

"You'll find as you go along you say 'I didn't know he was going to do that.' That's when you know that a character has come alive, when they do something unexpected. I remember writing a proposal for a novel and writing a scene in which there was an argument in a nightclub; one of the quiet, unassuming characters thumped somebody else.

"The way I like to write my comic strips is as if it were a movie playing in my head, and I have to pick out what is known in the films as the print moment; I have to find the one frame that sums up the action that's happening in that panel.

"This is something that you get a knack for, and the only way of learning something like that, and know you're doing it right, is to pick up the work of Peter David or J.M. DeMatteis because they are the masters as far as I'm concerned. That's not to say that Alan Moore isn't, just that Peter and Mark currently do it with superheroes.

"You've got this movie playing in your head, and you take the frame. You see the camera angles while it's playing in your mind. One of the things about artists is that it's up to the artist to direct the movie. I always say what camera angles I want, but I don't expect the artist to see it the way I visualise it, but that's the way I do it so I know exactly where I am. If the artist goes away and comes up with something better, I get the credit for it anyway, so I'm totally delighted." He laughs.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS?

Movies require their actors and actresses, just as comics need characters. Working directly with the artist, as Nick is with *Immortalis*, means that some of the characters are already designed, which gives the visual imagination something to grasp hold of. Other visuals come from elsewhere:

"I've just picked up a magazine, a photo magazine of the Skin 2 Rubberball Charity Ball, the fetish ball. Mark hasn't seen it yet, but there's a costume in there that's a vampire as far as I'm concerned. So now I have an image.

"I'm also working with with characters like Doctor Strange, so I know what they look like, so it's their voices I find interesting. I was writing Jacqueline Fallsworth, a.k.a. Spitfire, who's just recently been rejuvenated, and I realised that she would speak like one of the actresses in The Archers. It's Jennifer Aldridge's eldest daughter, whoever that is *[Debbie – Ed]*. I suddenly realised that this was the most perfect voice for this character.

"It's something that comes by writing, and writing, and writing, and the strangest thing about comics is that you're writing this open-ended novel but they publish the chapters as they come out. Charles Dickens didn't seem to have a problem with the technique, but your characters will grow over a long period and will do strange things.

"There's always this argument about whether a character can be sacrificed to plot, and one normally hears that stories have to be character driven: characters do these things because that's the sort of person they are. It's a difficult argument as far as I'm concerned because I'm never sure where to draw the line. You can spend hours just worrying whether you've done the right thing."

WHY, OH WHY...?

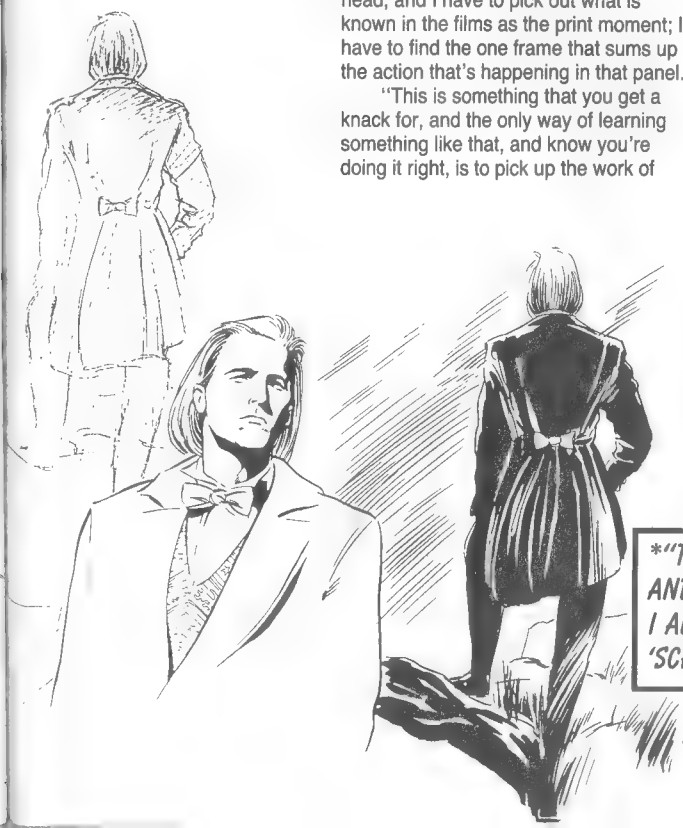
Outside of the hours of easy listening radio 4 (a tremendous source of information – writers are gannets for strange factual titbits) there are other strange habits that sometimes develop: some people prefer loud music whilst others prefer total silence; many writers and artists become obsessive soap opera fans; one writer I know of (a novelist) used to get up at four in the morning and work until noon without break, not even for a drink of water – even when he was on holiday!

There are plenty of other less unique habits says Nick: "The other thing to remember if you're a writer is that at least once a day you will wonder why you ever thought you could write: 'Why on Earth did I think I could write? This story is rubbish! It's SHIT!'

"At that point you have to leave it and come back later, and maybe it wasn't so bad, and there's a deadline looming, or you do something about it."

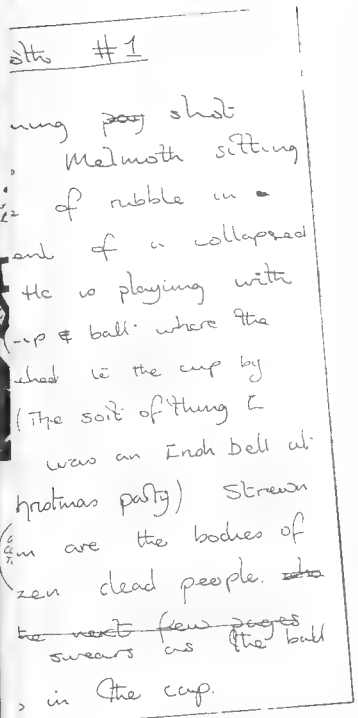
Mark Buckingham echoes the point:

Mark's original character sketches for Melmoth; the title later changed to Immortalis.



"THE DUMBEST QUESTION ANYBODY EVER ASKED A WRITER – AND THEY ALWAYS DO – IS 'WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS?' I ALWAYS GIVE THE SAME ANSWER. I ALWAYS SAY, 'SCHENECTADY'."

HARLAN ELLISON

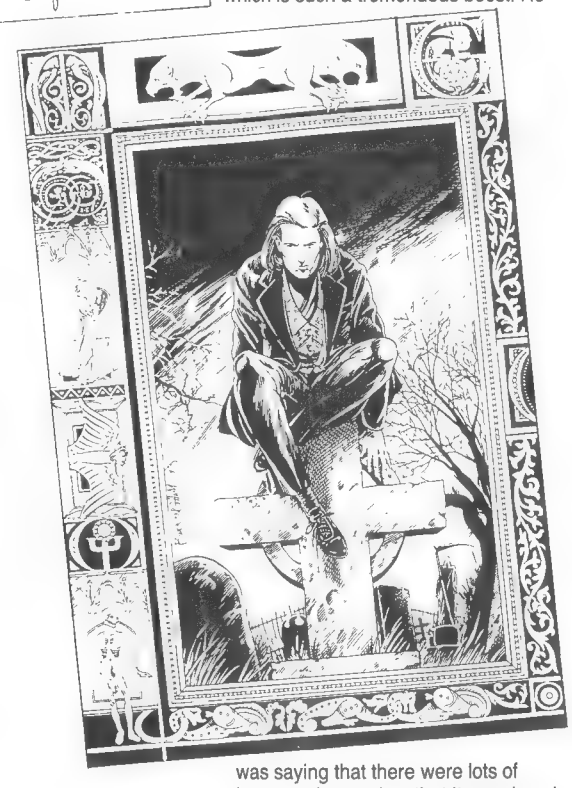


"If it's any comfort, most artists reach a point once a day where they consider they should never have started drawing, and should be working behind a bar in some cosy little pub somewhere."

Nick: "There's this amazing self-doubt because you never know if anything is any good until it's seen by someone else. That's where a good editor who supports you and believes in your vision is a joy. An editor who disbelieves in you and is totally opposed to your vision and who wants you to produce something that you're not happy with is a nightmare.

"This lack of self-confidence is a nightmare. I've just spent days and days looking at episode two of *Immortalis* at a sequence where the central character meets a girl and you're not quite sure if he falls in love with her – she certainly falls in love with him; I've got two pages to introduce the second character, the girl, and express what's going on between them. I think I've done it. I think I've found a key.

"It's a case of going over it again and again. Mark and I talked about this the other day when we were discussing the first script; when Mark got the first script he phoned me up and told me he liked it which is such a tremendous boost. He was saying that there were lots of interweaving stories, that it was done in nice little segments, that there was a lot going on. It's not padded out in any way because it all had to be squeezed in as far as I was concerned.



With thanks to Nick and Mark for allowing us to print notes and sketches which rarely see the light of day, let alone print.

"And yet, when I sat down to write the second issue, I thought 'God, I've got 22 pages to fill! How am I going to do it?' Of course, by the end of it I discovered I'd written a 23 page script. I'd miscounted and I'm going to have to talk to Paul [Neary] about it. This is something folks: you'll see this before you see the actual comic. Find out what happened to the 23rd page of issue 2; was it there or was it not?"

(Remember kids, page counts and article lengths are there for a purpose and if an editor stipulates something it's usually for a damn good reason. If you go overlength, or you don't trim your work back to size yourself, don't bleat about editorial interference when what comes out has been cut to the size it was supposed to be. End of public service announcement)

WHAT AM I DOING?

Writing and drawing are lonely professions where you will spend many hours, day after day, tucked away in whatever room of the house, or shed in the garden, you call your studio; you are, by the nature of your work, a loner (we will ignore for the moment shared studio set-ups – but even there you will mentally block off your surroundings whilst you work). Each day you will start with something that feels like an empty void which has got to be filled: a blank page. Some people sidestep this by leaving their work at a point which they can easily return to – perhaps a pencilled page you can come back to ink, or a paragraph you know exactly how you will write. Once the mind is adjusted to the job in hand, getting on with the rest of the day's work can seem easier.

Of course, it doesn't always work...does it Nick?

"Sometimes you've some vague idea of where it's going to go, then suddenly this little light goes..." OUT! "I'm not nice to be around then, I'm so pitying: 'Oh no, what am I doing?' You have to work through that.

"I know a guy called Stephen Schwartz who wrote the music to *Godspell* – when I started out my career in comics, Stephen was over here a lot because of the musical, *Children of Eden*, and we were talking about being a writer, and he asked 'How's it going? Have you got to the stage where you think you can't write? You do realise it becomes a stage.'

"It's true. You actually get to know that it's something you have to go through. Not every single time, but what it tends to be is the time when you just wander around... This is the time when you do a lot of research. You think, 'Well, I haven't got an idea in my head and I'm supposed to be writing this, so I'd better go and do some research because that's what writers do. I've got to be doing something.' You go and get as many ideas as you can in the hope that you're going to find that one phrase, or that one image that gives you the key.

"As I said earlier, I've just finished writing issue two of *Immortalis* and I had the problem of the scene between the central character and the girl. What happened was that I found a couple of lines from, well it was somebody falling in love, and the only romantic thing I could think of off the top of my head was *Romeo and Juliet*. And what does everybody know about *Romeo and Juliet*? It's the balcony scene: 'Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?'

"What people often assume is that she's saying 'Where the hell are you, Romeo?' – but it's actually 'Why are you called Romeo'; the whole plot is that because he's from another family and the two families are tribal, they can never be in love.

"I thought, 'That'll be interesting to put in.' Then I thought, 'That's silly and pretentious and you don't want to do that, Nick.'

"Eventually I had her rehearsing it in Fallsworth Manor on a sunny afternoon, not realising that anyone else is around, and Mortigan, the lead character, is underneath the window and completes the sentence. And he even does the climbing up the vine to say hello to her.

"There's an obvious playfullness which there often is at the beginning of relationships, and it leads up to that moment. And once I had those two lines and jettisoned the ideas that I'd first had, I thought it wasn't bad.

"I can be incredibly stubborn – if I think I like an idea I can spend days trying to make it work. But sometimes you've got to know when it's not right, and then you have to look at the pages you've written and cross the whole lot out. You put those pages to one side, rescue what you can, and think 'OK, I'll have a go at it again.'

HOW CAN I . . .

"One of the Ten Commandments issued by editors is 'Thou shalt rewrite'. And it's not just because the editor tells you to – you rewrite because that's part of the process. I think when you actually sit down to write, you put anything down. You have to make a mark on that paper, anything that's in your mind. Once it's down on paper you can play with it.

"There are plenty of other techniques, but that's how I do it. The other thing I tend to do is to get a sheet of A4 paper and number it 1 to 22 down the left hand side, and in two lines sum up what happens on each page. It doesn't work – you tend to realise 'Well, that's not happening on that page after all', but it helps you know whether you've got 22 pages of story or not. When you actually get to writing, you find that you haven't got enough material to fill a whole page, or what you thought would take two pages has actually taken five, but it's a great mental help to do that page plan.

"When I did *Warheads* I used to print out 22 little upright rectangles and sketch in little panel breakdowns. That worked best when you were trying to explain plots, or something simple like that, but *Immortalis* is full script and I trust Mark to do the page layout far better than I can – but I always direct my scripts! There are writers who go in and say 'Panel One' and describe the action, leaving it up to the artist to decide the camera angle, but for me I write in the camera angles. It sounds crazy because I know it's not going to turn out like I want it...'want' in inverted commas. It's a misleading word. I mean the way I see it in my mind. When you're working with a good artist you have to have confidence and trust in him: whoever you're working with, the writer's job stops at a certain point and you have to hand it over to the artist. With certain artists you get it back and you have to do a rescue mission with the dialogue and try to save it somehow. With good artists even, you may have to rejig the dialogue slightly to make sure it flows, because they may have come up with a better vision that you have.

"I've just said the immortal words. You have to hand it over to the artist..."

Which we do, next month. CW

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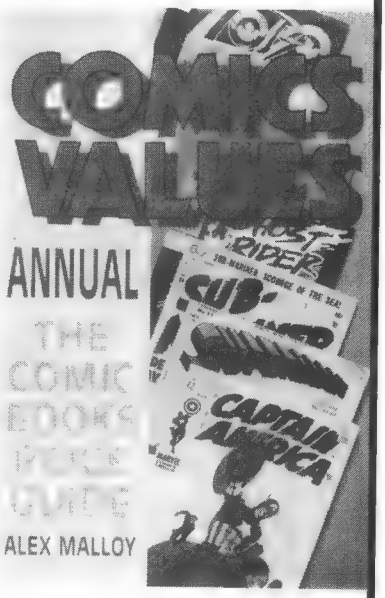

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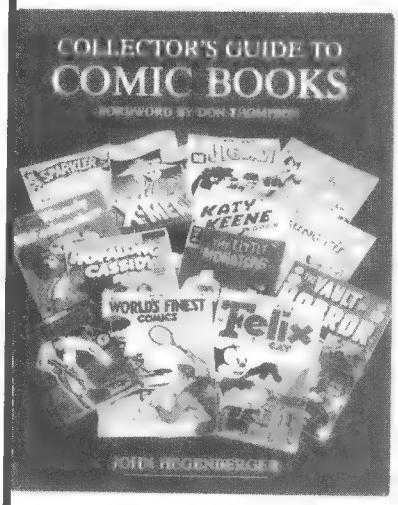

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Profiles

GARY FRANK

Gary Frank is one of those rare phenomena: a hot British artist. They're a small but growing band, led in the USA by Liam Sharp, whose *Death's Head II* trilogy was the first British comic to go into a silver covered second edition.

In the past the path to the USA was through *2000AD*, as many a DC talent will attest. But if you want to hit the US market direct, the new way in is through the doors of Marvel UK. The success of the British arm of Marvel has been nothing short of incredible in the past year, with the company now providing a sizeable chunk of Marvel's share of the market; the key to the door was Marvel's *Overkill* title and the 'Genesis '92' group of characters, which was where Gary Frank made his first steps from obscurity into the premier league.

Our colleagues over at *Comics International* boldly stated that "Franks seems a dead cert for comics super stardom," and you won't find us arguing with ITMA. Now, *Comic World*'s readers have voted him best newcomer in the artist bracket of the Readers's Poll, so it seemed like a good idea to phone Gary and tell him.

After a few seconds of shocked silence, Gary filled us in on some of his background:

"I went to Dan Abnett a few years ago, straight out of sixth form after I'd done my A-levels. I rang him up and said, 'Can I bring some stuff down?' He had a look at it, and gave me a few bits and pieces which kept me going for the first few years – Annual stuff, and some bits for *Toxic!*, which was Dan again. Then, basically, it all started happening when Marvel UK started to get *Overkill* together. Paul Neary dragged me down and beat me into shape."

The beating obviously worked: Harley Davis has proven herself a hit with fans – so much so that as well as her appearance in *Overkill* and the US sized *Motormouth* solo title, Marvel are rerunnig her adventures in *Exploits of Spider-Man*. The street-wise, foul mouthed, fashion statement has since picked up a side-kick in Killpower and a sonic scream, but lost her first, and best, artist: a fill-in on *Hell's Angel* aside – during which the Hell became Dark – Gary's rise picked up steam with a phone call from Hulk editoress Bobbie Chase:

"Bobbie wanted to know if I'd do a pin-up for *Hulk* – I said, 'I'll do it', and then she offered me the pencils! It was so unexpected. When she rang me up and said about the poster I was knocked on my arse just doing that, let alone getting the regular pencils! You can't really turn that sort of thing down... *The Incredible Hulk*! I used to read it as a kid!"

At the moment he's still knocked out with the job. Is there anything else lined up for the future? "At the moment, I don't really know. Basically I get a plot sent through and just badger away in my shed out in the back garden until it's finished – I tend to work pretty slow these days, so I haven't really got time to take on anything else at the moment."

That sort of devotion to one strip will tell. Expect to hear more of Gary Frank; this year's Best Newcomer, next year...who knows?

GARY FRANK STRIPOGRAPHY

The Crap Fairy (in *Toxic! 25*, 12 Sep 1991, by Gary Ushaw)
Motormouth (by Graham Marks. Inks by Cam Smith): Wild Card! (in *Overkill 1-2*, 24 Apr-8 May 1992; reprinted in *Motormouth 1*, Jun 1992, *Exploits of Spider-Man 1*, 21 Oct 1992) Shop Till You Drop! (in *Overkill 3-4*, 22 May-5 Jun 1992; reprinted in *Motormouth 2*, Jul 1992, *Exploits of Spider-Man 2*, 18 Nov 1992) Tokyo Take-Out! (in *Overkill 5-6*, 19 Jun-3 Jul 1992; reprinted in *Motormouth 3*, Aug 1992, *Exploits of Spider-Man 3*, 16 Dec 1992) Psychic Surgery! (in *Overkill 7-8*, 17 Jul-31 Jul 1992; reprinted in *Motormouth & Killpower 4*, Sep 1992, *Exploits of Spider-Man 4*, 6 Jan 1993) Pilgrims Progress (in *Overkill 11-12*, 11 Sep-25 Sep 1992; reprinted in *Motormouth & Killpower 6*, Nov 1992)
Hell's Angel (by Simon Furman. Inks by Andy Lanning): Bad Blood (in *Overkill 16-18*, 20 Nov-18 Dec 1992; reprinted in *Dark Angel 6*, Dec 1992)
Incredible Hulk (in *Incredible Hulk 403*- now, Mar 1993-present, by Peter David. Inks by Cam Smith)

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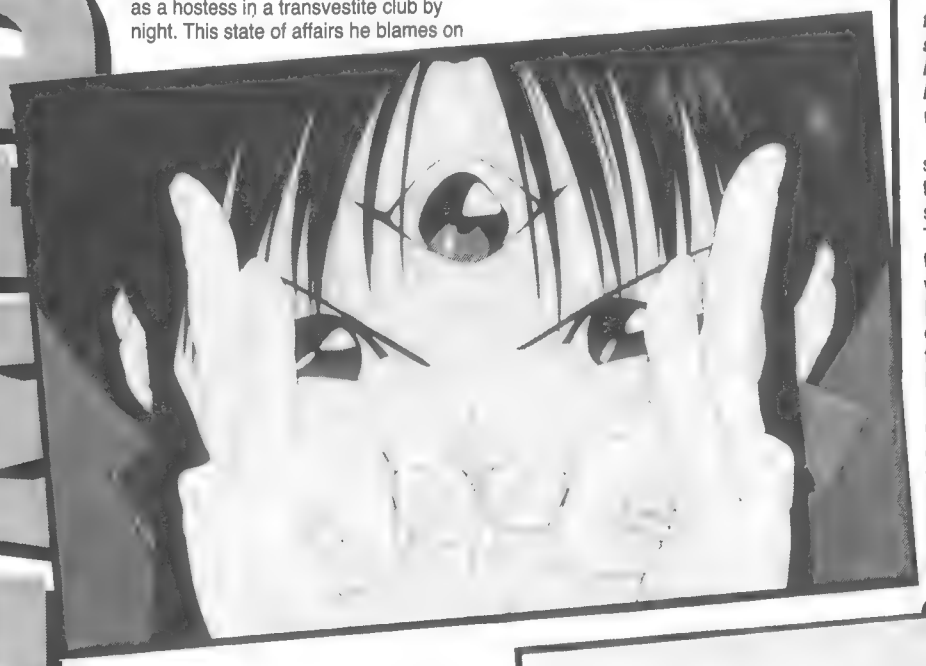
3*3 EYES (18)

Japanese animation label Manga Video get 1993 off to a good start with their first release of the year, a typically electric mix of occult horror, comedy and pathos as only the Japanese can do it. The comic upon which this is based was created by Yuzo Takada in 1987, though a five issue translation of the first 150 page volume by Innovation seemed not to catch on with western fans.

Yakumo Fujii is a Tokyo teenager, attending high school by day and working as a hostess in a transvestite club by night. This state of affairs he blames on his father, missing for four years in Tibet. When a mysterious girl named Pai arrives bearing his fathers skull and a letter asking Yakumo to aid her in the search for a mystic statue, he angrily refuses, but after a fatal encounter with a demon, he finds he has become indestructible, and intimately linked to Pia's quest.

Typically, the American dubbing detracts, but the involved story compensates for the assault on the ears, as does the stylish and colourful animation, which cleverly overcomes the obviously modest budget.

John Gosling



ULTRAMAN: THE ALIEN INVASION (PG)

This is bizarre. No, make that REALLY BIZARRE. It's a Japanese/ Australian co-production with an American hero. It starts off on Mars and then shifts to Australia which, for reasons never adequately explained, will be at the forefront in the Earth's up-coming battle with an alien invader called Goudis.

Ultraman, if I am to believe the blurb, is big news in Japan and even has his own Super Nintendo game. Well, why not? I believe six impossible things before breakfast. What I find rather more difficult to believe is the goings-on within these 94 minutes. For instance:

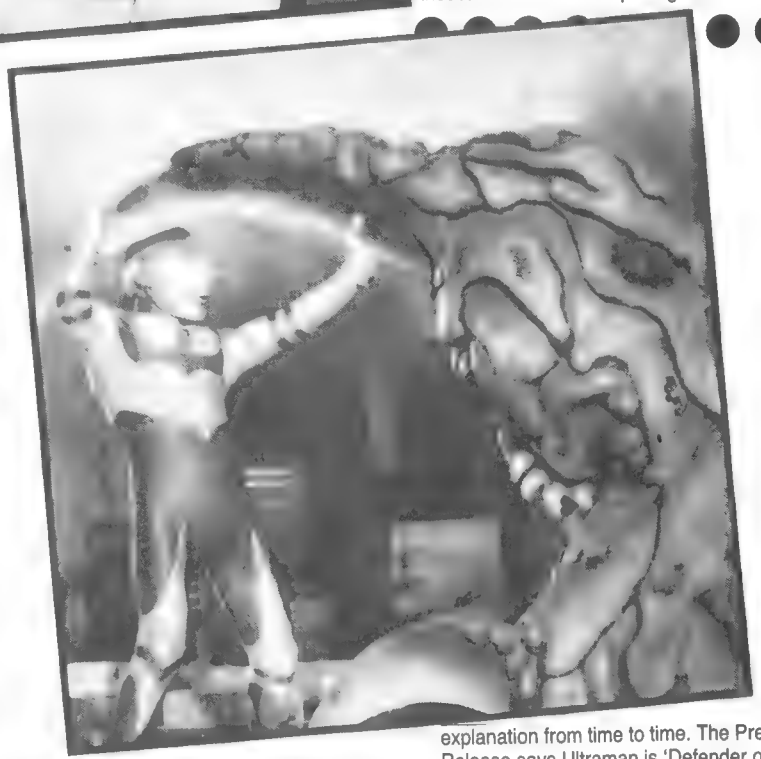
Two astronauts get attacked while on Mars by this Goudis geezer. Fine. But then Ultraman appears from out of nowhere. Where did he spring from? What is he doing on Mars? Why does he have such a naff costume? We are not told.

OK, so Ultraman rescues these guys and one of them, Jack Shindo, the hero, gets presented with a medallion by Ultraman so that when he returns to Earth he becomes a new version of Ultraman. But the other guy gets turned into an agent of Goudis. How? Why?

Back on Earth, these strange biological mutations start kicking in courtesy of Goudis and all these giant lizards start attacking an Australian town. Buildings are struck . . . and they explode! Why? Now this may look very dramatic but I like there to be some reason behind these things. Anyway, there's this semi-military force called UMA (Universal Multipurpose Agency, a kind of up-dated SHADO for those of you old enough to remember Gerry Anderson's *UFO*), who take on the alien. And, well, whaddya know, everything turns out OK in the end.

The special effects are fine but personally I could do with a little explanation from time to time. The Press Release says Ultraman is 'Defender of the Universe' and comes from some planet in the Nebula M-78. But he's not hugely communicative and without the info package this might have escaped me. Basically, this is tosh. In its favour it is tosh done with a straight face but with so many holes in the script I can't say Ultraman won me over to his cause. So, call me a cynic. . . .

Dave Dickson



S

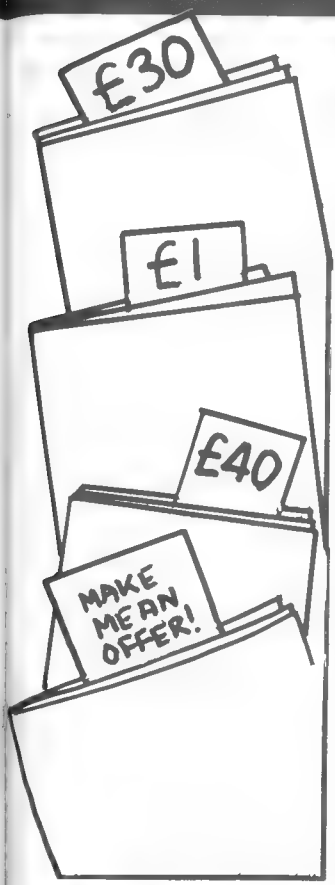
Always wanted to be in the Comics business, but can't draw, write, or ink and have no desire to be a publisher? Can't afford a Shop? Sat on a large collection of comics that you don't know what to do with? Become a Comic Mart Dealer! It all looks so easy. Throw a few old comics in a couple of battered Xerox boxes, take a table at the local Mart and watch the money roll in!

Let me shatter a few illusions; firstly, the money won't just roll in and secondly, if you seriously want to be involved as a dealer on a long term basis; be prepared for a lot of hard work.

Like a lot of dealers, my wife and I started by selling the odd duplicate comic to local comic shops when our collection started to outgrow the space available. The more it grew, the more we realised that we needed to look more closely at what was filling up the spare bedroom. Instead of collecting everything, we decided to concentrate on specific themes and sell the rest of the collection. But how to go about selling it?

The local comic shops, understandably, gave a small percentage of the guide price, so perhaps a table at the local Mart would be a good idea. After selecting what to sell, everything was bagged and priced, in itself a fairly time consuming task – looking up over a thousand comics in the price guides

You Want To Be A Comic Mart Dealer?



takes several evenings.

A visit to the local mart followed, firstly to establish how well attended it was, who ran it, table availability and costs.

Having booked a table at the next mart, we then waited anxiously for the day to arrive. The evening before the mart, comics were piled into old Xerox boxes; arriving at the mart we laid out the boxes and sat back waiting for the money to roll in. It trickled in. By the end of day we had covered the cost of the table and that was about it.

The next mart was a different story. In the meantime we arranged the comics in an orderly fashion with title cards, replaced the Xerox boxes with Comic boxes and arrange the stock on the table in a more appealing manner. This time we made a small profit and the bug had bitten. Two years later we attend at least 15 marts during the year and have a steady base of regular customers.

If you are going to start as a dealer at Marts to get the best out of it, you must run the activity as a retail business, with separate accounts, proper planning and stock control. None of this is easy and requires dedication and a lot of work in the evenings. If you are going to start by selling your collection, obviously the best stuff is going to go first and before long you will be left with a core of stock that is too good for the bargain box but that no-one would ever describe as hot sellers.

Moving these comics may take several months or even years. The trick with any retail business, is of course to keep turning over stock. The buying of stock, particularly in bulk is an area fraught with potential pitfalls. Bulk buying can lead to obtaining multiple copies of stock that won't shift even in the 25p box; be wary of buying every collection that is offered to you, it may have a few choice items, but will the bulk of it sell at a reasonable rate? Don't pay over the odds for collections, work out what percentage of guide you can offer and still cover your costs and make a small profit.

If you start off doing local marts and stay doing just local marts, people will get to know your stock and regular attendees might stop looking unless they know you rotate the stock so that you have something different to offer. Try branching out and attend Marts further away. Tastes and markets vary considerably across the UK and we've noticed market differences beteween cities only 30 miles apart. What never sells in one location could be a real seller somewhere else. The best market research comes from watching and listening to your customers, rather than the price guides. Remember the price guides are just that – guides. Market forces determine prices not magazines, (though it can be argued that they can influence market forces).

To give an example, if dealer A sold a copy of "Gimmick Comics #0" for £30, which he bought for £15 and dealer B, who bought it for the same price, has it on the wall of a mart for £50. The guide says it should sell for £40. Who priced it right. The dealer who sold it at £30, made his profit level and pleased a customer who had a perceived bargain; or the dealer stuck with inventory on his wall hoping to sell at a larger profit margin in anticipation that the guide price will rise?

As I've now twice mentioned the dirty word – profit, lets examine this aspect. When sellig comics as a Mart dealer don't forget to work out your break-even point and profit level before pricing. Does your mark-up cover purchase price, table costs, comic boxes, bags, stationery, insurance, car costs, petrol, etc. plus your budget for re-stocking? Add your profit to that and match it against the guide price. It's a dead cert that you will have to reduce your profit levels to sell the comic.

Don't expect to make a fortune and you won't be disappointed. Most small Mart dealers make enough to keep the business self-financing and that's about it.

So why do it? To be involved in the Comics business, to turn your hobby into a self generating business, to meet other comics fans on a regular basis, any of the above would suffice as a reasonable answer.

But beware, you will soon need a bigger spare bedroom!

Alan Porter

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A SILENT ARMAGEDDON 1

by Simon Jowett & John M. Burns, Dark Horse, $2.95

From the computer static cover onwards, John Burns pulls off all the tricks he has mastered over the years like a magician pulling rabbits out of a top hat. Using expressive lighting and colour he has produced a feast for fans of his artwork. But what about the story? It's actually very violent in places and moves with raw-nerve energy, shifting seamlessly from a Cold War opening to a modern day Soft War plot involving artificial intelligence and computer hacking. Plenty of elements for cyberpunk, but this is Bond; only its Bond without any of the recognisable trappings of the usual Bond, no Bond girl, only a wheelchair-bound thirteen year-old with a talent for computers, and no classic Bond villain – yet. At the heart of the story is an organisation called Cerebus whose only calling card so far has been a three-headed dog emblem and a number of explosions. The plot meanders a little: at first, Omega seems to be a programme designed to side-step computer security, a worm which opens up a flood of top secret information, bank accounts and the controls to the world's nuclear missiles; towards the end, however, Omega shows itself to have some capacity for intelligence and dialogue. Cerebus want it, and when they discover that a group in Oxford is working on an artificial intelligence they set out to destroy it.

So far Bond hasn't shown up much – refreshing in itself, as Bond has in the past often been forced onto the front of the stage to the expense of the background and story. Simon Jowett is a newcomer, I believe, and he hasn't taken the easy option of babes and wry one-liners.

(Dave McLoughlin)

SHORT REVIEWS

"Are you brave? Do you know how to use your swords? Are you slow of mind?"

"Yes, yes and yes . . . in that order!"

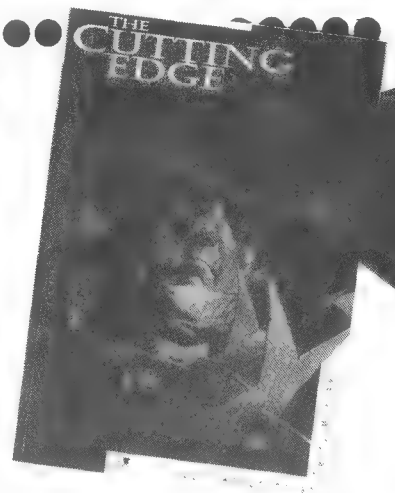
Could it be anyone else speaking but **Groo**? His Epic comic reaches its hundredth issue this month ($2.95). Few other titles have matched its consistency over this length of time: *Groo* is as reliable as the sun. When something becomes as regular a fixture as this, it's all too easy to take it for granted; to think you've read all the stories of Groo's world that can be told, to believe you've heard all the jokes. Okay, so you probably *have* heard all the jokes, but the great skill of Sergio Aragones and Mark Evanier is to keep the stories fresh. They use the limitations of the premise to free their imaginations; and besides, it's a good joke.

While we're talking institutions, the Legion Of Super-Heroes commemorates its thirty-fifth anniversary of near-continuous appearances this year with the debut of **Legionnaires** (DC, $1.25). It's based on a concept anime aficianados might call *Legion*-chan – most of the team are teenage versions of the characters from the parent book. The series run parallel to each other, but *Legionnaires* returns to the more traditional Legion format abandoned by its counterpart. The costumes and roll call are back back back – Legion elections can only be a heartbeat away. Chris Sprouse's attractively wide-eyed artwork

THE CUTTING EDGE

by Terry Murray & Jeff Anderson, Lion Publishing, £3.99

The second book of the Legends of Larian is visually the equal of last year's *The Shadow's Edge*, a fantasy which introduced the half-breed bounty hunter, Madlin, and a quest to watch over the newly crowned queen of Berberous. Like most sequels, you need to reread the first chapter to understand some of the basic settings and characters, although in truth Murray's script is slick without offering any challenge on either count. The characters are introduced, speak their lines and are then dispatched without any sympathy; the hero is equally shallow, and what should be a climactic, fever pitched battle between the hero and baddie comes to a crashing halt when the balcony gives way and the baddie falls to his death. The final frame reintroduces a creature previously given a cameo in the first volume who, no doubt, will have a central role in part three, but dialogue like "The game is not over yet your majesty. Ha ha ha ha..." (which denotes evil) makes you wonder whether its going to be worth the bother.



Jeff Anderson's artwork is fine without being stunning, and this makes a nice package if you like your fantasy safe. But it doesn't match up to its title.

(Richard Hudson)

captures perfectly the naiveity of the enterprise: good-time adventuring has returned to the thirtieth century.

Paul Grist's **Kane 1** (Dancing Elephant Press, £1.80) is Frank Miller filtered through the same mesh of charm *Legionnaires* has been subjected to. While *Kane*'s setting and themes are evocative of any of Miller's hard-boiled vigilante comics, there is a fundamental difference; and that difference is mood. It's in the nature of Grist's artwork that it has a smile on its face; it's in the line, he's pretty well stuck with it. That said, the issue is impressive in its economy: telling a coherent story in a single hit is an underrated skill. This satisfying completeness and the beautiful simplicity of Grist's art make *Kane* a title well worth seeking out (if your local store can't oblige with a copy, you can write to Dancing Elephant at 207 Marcliffe Road, Sheffield S6 4AH).

At the other end of the self-publishing spectrum lies the grand schemes and marketing oomph of Image; and if their deadline problems are anything to go by, they're finding running the whole show a lot more difficult than they'd anticipated. Their tardiness wouldn't be important were it not for the scale of Image's ambitions in the industry. Film options and trading card sets are of no use without a flow of creative work to nourish them. Todd McFarlane's **Spawn** is the one title to have maintained a reasonably punctual schedule; it's also become the most distinctive of the Image line. In a curious way, McFarlane's much-maligned writing has been appropriate here, given the bizarro world and cast he's created. The writers he's invited round for the next four issues have an unusual playground to explore. Alan Moore's tour of Hell in issue 8 ($1.95) is what Dante might have written if he'd ever visited Brooklyn; and it doesn't jar in the least with the previous issues of the series. McFarlane gets to draw loads of weird things and enjoys himself, and the colouring is as awe-inspiring as ever.

Some news just in – in an exciting development, now you too can experience Purgatory in your own home. Simply snuggle up on the sofa with **Hellstorm: Prince Of Lies 1** (Marvel, $2.95): rarely has a book read so much like no editor's hand has touched it. Michael Bair's flashy illustrations cut every storytelling corner going, making following the plot a frustrating exercise. Rafael Nieves then compounds the problem with leaden, overripe scripting that serves no purpose, when he should have been trying to do something about the mess on the floor. *Hellstorm* deserves either a radical and immediate overhaul or go back under whatever misconceived rock it crawled out from.

David Greenberger has been publishing *The Duplex Planet* since 1979. The magazine uses material collected during Greenberger's work with the residents of Boston's Duplex Nursing Home: now **Duplex Planet Illustrated 1** (Fantagraphics, $2.95) translates some of the interviews into comic form. With the spoken word being the spoken word – free to ignore the requirements of prose writing – the result is often surreal. The anecdotes and remembrances don't follow conventional story structure either, and the artists feed off the strangeness to add to the disorientating effect with styles that favour imagination over polished technique.

Biting at the heels of DC's well-received Vertigo imprint comes Milestone, which intends to bring a more contemporary feel to the super-hero comic. Milestone Media itself is one of these studios that are springing up at the moment; you've perhaps heard mention of Homage or Gaijin. Milestone have a licensing agreement with DC; the former produces the material and has editorial control, the latter handles the business end. The project begins with **Hardware 1** ($1.50/$2.95, depending on which you buy; the second includes the ubiquitous trading card and poster, etc.). *Hardware* is a twist on the Tony Stark/Iron Man model; here the talented inventor battles his employer, a corporation he has discovered is rotten to the core (big surprise). The set-up could lead to inertia, a series of skirmishes between the two sides with little point to it; or the title could learn from *Groo*'s example to rise above its constraints, as Hardware himself is striving to do.

(Richard Hill)

Review copies courtesy of Birmingham's Fantastic Store (021-643 3667). Where prices are quoted in dollars, the sterling rate may vary slightly from shop to shop. Thanks also to Ian and Edge.

SMALL PRESS

KANE 1, *£1.80, by Paul Grist, Dancing Elephant Press, 207 Marchcliffe Rd, Sheffield*

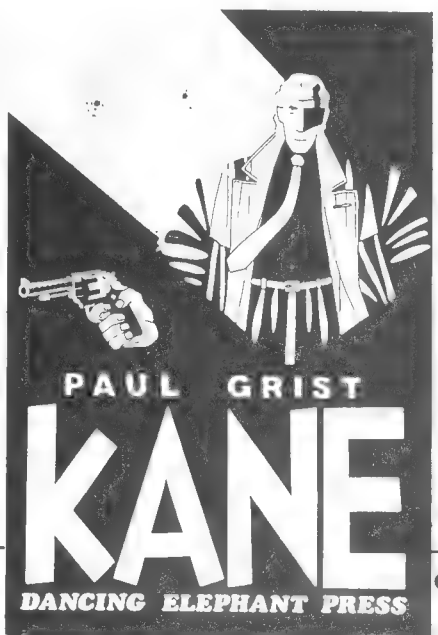
Grist's forte is marrying his almost childlike images to the harshest of stories – neurotic boy outsiders (*St. Swithins Day*) and rioting prisoners ('Insiders').

Yet after returning to his *Beano*-induced cops-and-robbers in *Burglar Bill* he's been transported cross-atlantic. Not since *Gregory's Girl* director Bill Forsyth has something so British turned to bite the Big Mac.

While compositions and storytelling are as faultless as ever (with the opening sequence stunning in effect), this cop-show plot isn't disguised for being set in New 'Eden' and the flourishes are Frank Miller's.

I'm not implying greed against this self-published venture; sadly, when it comes to culture the dollar dictates.

(Gavin Burrows)



Ethereal 4, *A4, 85p, 24pp.*
All Women Are Bad 2, *A4, 80p, 24pp.*
Fury 4 *(of 4), A4, 85p, 24pp – mini 'sex men' insert, from D. Gordon, 50 Craigmount Brae, East Craigs, Edinburgh EH12 8XF*

I won't waste too much time. If you want women stripping down to undies, women tied down being gang-raped and saying: "Yeah, F***er, go ahead . . . so I can kill you when you've finished" and then she gets gang raped twice "just for the hell of it", or, "we found Lise . . . Dead. Hayes killed her. But not before he f***cked her", along with bad art and purile sex illoes that lead one to believe the person responsible is a woman hating 13 year old this is for you. Most of the girly art looks traced and Jane Russell and Sharon Stone are rendered by this little sicko. Maybe Marvel should check out the Sex-Men insert as its so obviously Wolverine and Storm. I'm not allowed to use bad language but I'd love to in this case.

(Terry Hooper)

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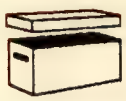

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STATE OF THE ART...

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FIRST PUBLICATION RIGHTS

Steven J. Hilton
Wombwell, Barnsley

Dear Sir,
A few issues back you printed a letter of mine in which I said that I was a writer looking for an artist; well to be honest the period between me posting the letter and writing this one have left that earlier statement looking rather foolish. I have been hard at work devising a range of characters that I intend to try to use 'if' I should ever be fortunate enough to get a regular writing assignment.

There is a problem: amongst the concepts I have been toying with was a British super-hero title which, amongst its leading characters, would have included BRITANNIA and THE BULLDOG, but before I would even get rough drafts of these characters into print they both appear as part of Chris Morgan's *Brit Force*. How could I possibly stop this from happening again? How can I make sure that characters I spend months developing are not also be developed by other people who are just lucky enough to get their version out first?

I would be grateful if you could offer any advice on the rights of creators ad how copyrights can be gained. I believe it is possible to patent or register a concept, but who do I see?

Copyright is something we hope to tackle in the Masterclass later this year, and I must admit it's something of a grey area. Two people may have the same ideas at the same time, and a concept may even be used twice in quick succession without a hint of plagiarism. We put a copyright notice on CW for instance, and back that up by sending copies to the Legal Deposit Office in Wetherby, York. However, that does not necessarily copyright the magazine, but it does legally prove the publication of the magazine and the presentation of the features; by dint of publication our features become copyright. In our case, we buy first rights on articles, and copyright reverts to our authors on publication since we have verbally contracted and paid for one use only; by arrangement we use illustrations and characters from many different publishers and creators who retain all rights in the art and concepts we review.

As for registering a character or name, prominent publication seems to be the easiest way to register it. There have been cases recently where a name has been reused – or at least tried to be used – which risked being an infringement of copyright. Your problem seems to be with the names you wanted to use, as I presume the characters are your own creation? Unfortunately it seems that it is a matter of luck – DC wanted to call Hellblazer *'John Constantine – Hellraiser', but Clive Barker got in first, and Marvel UK originally announced* Overkill *as 'Mean Streak', so it isn't limited to the fan press. Does anyone remember M*rvelm*n?*

Another way is to register the character with the Patent Office. We're still waiting for details on exactly how you go about this and whether it will cost you vast sums of money, but when we do hear, it'll be high on the agenda for a Masterclass.

CENSORSHIP AND CHANGING THE LAW

Nick Vince
Comic Creators Guild

Dear Steve,
I thought it about time I wrote concerning the raid on Gosh! and what it is the Guild is attempting to do about changing the status quo and asking your readership for help.

Following is the interim statement issued by the Guild concerning seizures by Customs, which will I hope help to focus what might be done next.

"The Comic Creators Guild strongly condemns any action taken by Customs and Excise in seizing imported comics published expressly for the enjoyment of mature comics readers. This material is freely available in Europe and the USA and we believe the citizens of this country have an equal right of access to it.

At present there is no clear guide regarding the importation of material for mature readers. Without clear guide lines on what material Customs and Excise is liable to seize, creators, publishers and retailers of comics for mature readers cannot freely carry out their trade without fear of seizure of monthly titles which, in the nature of the trade, they import sight unseen.

We call on H.M. Government to bring the law by which the Customs and Excise acts in seizing supposedly indecent and obscene material (the Customs Consolidation Act of 1876 and the Customs and Excise Management Act of 1979) in line with the Obscene Publications Act (1959) so that imported comics could not be forfeit unless forfeiture would be justified under the terms of the Obscene Publications Act. As the law relating to imported comics now stands, a Court is not bound to consider either the test of obscenity or the defence that such material is for the public good – valuable checks on extremism which are available when a charge is brought under the Obscene Publications Act. Whether or not an imported comic is obscene should be judged by the same legal test that applies to all forms of art and literature published in this country."

We are encouraging our members to use the statement as a basis for letters to their MPs calling for a change in the law. I urge your readers to do the same. The Guild is contacting those groups we feel might be interested in this matter for advice and support. We are also considering the feasibility of co-ordinating a petition as part of the campaign.

However, before we go any further we are asking for information, from any retailer in the country who has had direct experience of raids and seizures of comics, not only by Customs and Excise, but by the Police. We regard it as vital that we should proceed with as clear a picture of the national situation as possible.

Retailers, and anyone else wishing to contact the Guild on this matter with information or suggestions, should write to the Comics Creators Guild, 7 Dilke Street, LONDON SW3 4JE.

BUT IS IT ART?

E.M.V. Kaspar
Newquay

Dear Editor,
I am a journalist in my twenties, who has long taken an interest in comic books and other narrative art forms. I would like to make some observations about the current state of the comic book industry and the ways in which I believe it is going astray.

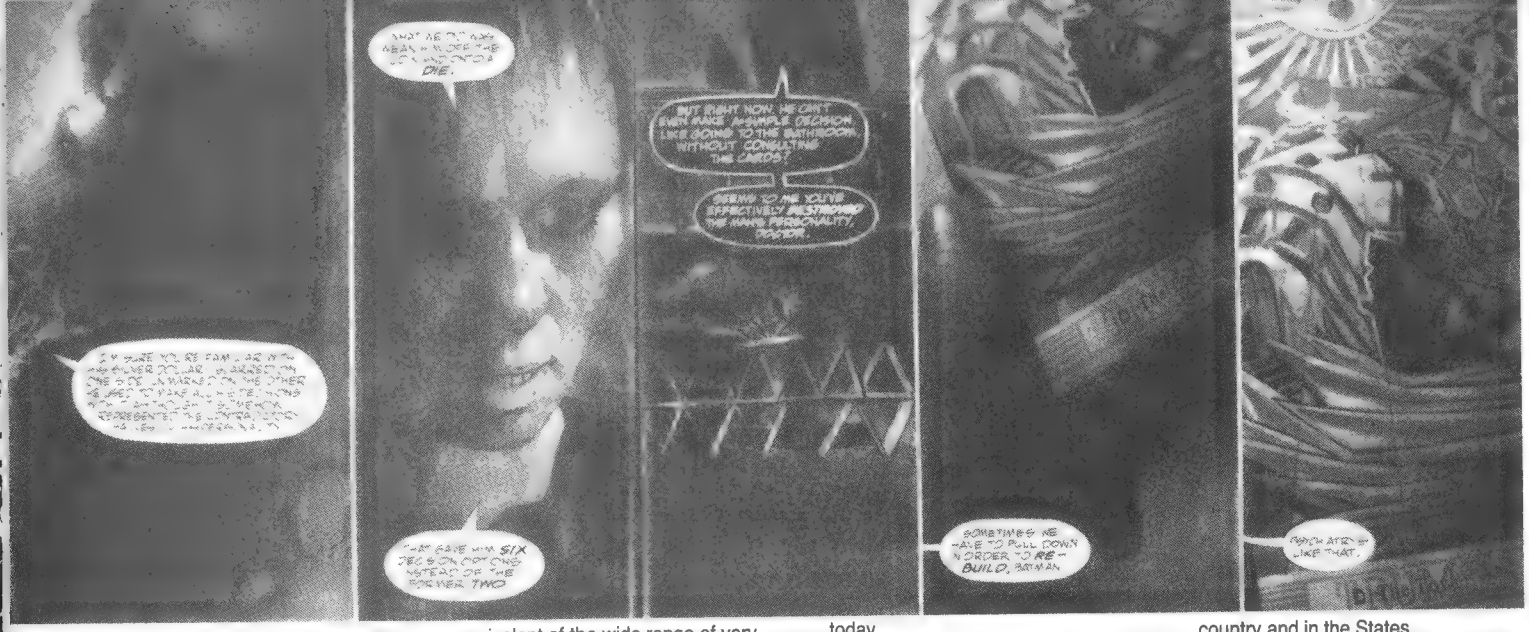
Adult comics or 'graphic novels' should not merely be cult rags aimed at various subgroups, nor should they be pretentious pseudo-philosophical tracts.

Adult comics, or comics specifically designed for mature readers, should be similar in range and scope and effect to the best of today's Hollywood films, and should have good strong plots that will involve readers, and not bore them to tears.

Any philosophising should be kept to a minimum, as should pretentious design or visual techniques.

If comic book publishers really want to attract an overwhelming number of adult readers, then they should start publishing stories that have a definite appeal to people who do not normally read comics, but enjoy adventure films and novels.

They should commission graphic novels that have a very wide appeal, that would be the comic book


I'M SURE YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH THE SILVER DOLLAR. HEADS ON ONE SIDE, A PROFILE ON THE OTHER. I'D LIKE TO MAKE A DECISION USING IT, BUT I'M AFRAID I'VE MISPLACED MY LUCKY COIN.
JUST HAVE HIM SIX JELSON COINS INSTEAD OF THE SILVER TWO.
BUT RIGHT NOW, HE CAN'T EVEN MAKE A SIMPLE DECISION LIKE GOING TO THE BATHROOM WITHOUT CONSULTING THE CARDS!
SEEING AS HE LIVES EFFECTIVELY ACCORDING TO THE WHIMS OF DESTINY, SIR...
SOMETIMES WE HAVE TO PULL DOWN IN ORDER TO RE-BUILD, BATMAN.
PUNCH ATOM LIKE THAT.

equivalent of the wide range of very successful films directed by Steven Spielberg, for example.

Social messages and so on could well be effective in the plots, but only where appropriate, and not contrived.

These works should contain a reasonable amount of sex, and romance, as well as action and adventure, as is the case in the best movies.

Even a comic-book version of something like *Terminator 2*, which has a strong, convincing, albeit way-out science fiction plot, and engaging characters, would be far better than the dreary and/or pretentious trash many people are producing under the auspices of comic book publishers today.

I suspect the main reason that over-elaborate, pretentious graphic novels are currently being produced is to curry favour with gullible critics who don't know a suit of Emperor's New Clothes when they see one.

And of course these sort of things have the benefit of being new, and having the power to shock, and are all very *dernier cri*.

But in a few years people will lose interest in them, and the whole thing will become passe, and some other stunt will doubtless be tried on. Whether or not it will prove successful is another matter.

The whole comic book industry is totally jaded at present, both in this country and in the States.

What is lacking is some good, solid story-writing coupled with some true inventiveness and creativity, as there was in the 1930s and 40s. After all, this age produced most of the comic book heroes which are being mucked about today, and which have yet to be bettered. If this were not the case, why would current graphic novel writers rely on them so much?

The last thing the industry wants, in the end, is a bunch of authors who give the impression that they are campus prats trying to be clever, spouting thinly-disguised sixth-form philosophy.

Which, sadly, describes the current state of affairs.

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ABBREVIATIONS

THIS IS A LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS YOU MAY FIND IN THE CLASSIFIEDS & LISTING SECTIONS

M.	Mint Perfect
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